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THE TWO HENRY JAMESES

[This essay is introductory to *Henry James, His Symbolism and His Critics*, which will appear in the next *Scrutiny*.—Ed.].

THE editors of *Scrutiny* have asked me to resume my conclusions about the relation between the work of Henry James and the theology and psychology of his father, the Swedenborgian mystic. The chief of these is that the novelist based an extensive system of symbolism on his father's view of the world, and that this is most clearly apparent in the last three completed novels.[1] The work of the elder James has not had a great deal of attention from critics or historians of philosophy, but the late turn of the wheel which has brought existentialism into view may awaken interest in his almost secular mysticism, a mysticism which imprisons the divinity in man.[2] His prime emphasis falls just where his successors now place it, on our estrangement from the godhead which dwells in us, and in us alone.

Our estrangement or alienation brings about a complete inversion of reality. Existing human institutions and socially sanctioned motivations are topsy-turvy. The visible church is God's enemy; visible virtue is simply selfishness, one form or another of the desire to be 'somebody'. The elder James's handling of this insight anticipates Veblen's analysis in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. He accepts rampant individualism as a matter of course. Those who are given over to lust or desire for the power conferred by money or status are in the grip of 'honest natural evils'. These are not damning; they are an inevitable preparation for our regeneration. The people whom Lincoln Steffens later described as 'honest crooks' must run the government, for humanitarianism would infallibly mistake the strength and character of the energies which animate the social scene. America is actually better off because it does not freeze selfishness into enduring institutional forms.

However there is an absolute evil. Self-righteousness, self-worship, is a sin without remedy. What the self-righteous man does is to invert the godhead within him and try to make it a possession like any other possession. By such a man 'God-in-us', which we know as conscience, is given outward form—as in an

[1]The earlier study, 'Henry James and the New Jerusalem', appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, Autumn, 1946, pp. 515-566.
[2]*Cf.* Austin Warren, *The Elder Henry James*; and Herbert Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1947.

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image of the Virgin—and appropriated. When we worship ourselves we need a visible idol. We seize a young girl who represents the divine love or conscience and try to make her the priestess of our self-worship. Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* is just such a sinner. He seeks to make a 'portrait' (inversion) of the 'lady' (divine love). By doing so he brings to a halt within himself the process of regeneration. He worships an object which stands for self-love, or makes that which is real and inward something outward and static. One cannot over-emphasize the importance which the elder James attached to moral energy, moral spontaneity. His universe is one of moral energies which the self-righteous man tries to arrest.

This is the fatal case. But it is not the history of the world past or to come. The elder James had an apocalyptic vision characterized by the title of his last major work, *Society: The Redeemed Form of Man*. The stages which lead to this heavenly socialism are variously described, but for the present purpose they may be called formation, creation and marriage. The first thing God does is to make something other than, foreign to, himself, a set of moulds or matrices into which to pour his love. He limits and therefore denies himself in order to increase the number of beings capable of love. By this act the divine love is wholly swallowed up in creatures foreign to it. This is 'formation'. Hereafter creation, the process which makes us able to love, begins.

> 'Creation necessarily *in*volves the creator and obscures his perfection in the exact ratio of its *e*volving the creature and illustrating his imperfection. Unless therefore the creature *himself* reproduce the creative infinitude concealed in his nature it must be forever obliterated from remembrance'.

The way in which the creature illustrates his imperfection is to abandon his parents, the divine love and the divine wisdom, and to cleave to his wife, the Eve or selfhood. In other words, the millions of finite men conclude that they are separate and distinct, and, unaware that a single divine energy is at work in them all, try to increase their sense of separateness by *appropriation*, sexual, economic, or political. The selfhood, Eve or *proprium* (the terms are interchangeable) is in the ascendant and gets Adam (mankind) to conceive of the divine wisdom as 'nature', or the physical world. The world as Adam under the thumb of Eve sees it is a place full of objects to be grabbed, a place in which it pays to be 'somebody', and, finally, a place ruled over by a God like ourselves, an arbitrary and exacting ruler, who cherishes those who are useful to him and hates those who are not.

A man be said to be regenerate when he gives up this theological and metaphysical dualism—abandons, that is, the notion that his selfhood stands over against nature; believes instead that 'nature' is a name for the divine wisdom, and releases the imprisoned divine love. Such a man thinks God's thoughts (nature) and feels

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God's emotion (selfless love). This inclusive narcissism cannot be fully realized till all men see the world as a poem which describes their own divine nature. When everyone is able to abandon the fiction of separateness, and live simply through acts of selfless love, the marriage or third stage has been reached. God and man are united in the 'divine-natural humanity'—a great orchestra hymning itself, an orchestra in which we can distinguish performances but cannot identify the performers.

The elder James's system aims at a complete parallelism between the history of mankind and the history of a given individual. In naming over the aspects of personality we are naming the energies which account for the creation and dictate its consummation in the divine-natural humanity. These are: the divine love, the divine wisdom, the Adam, the Eve, the senses, the intellect, and that which includes all these, the Lord or divine-natural humanity. An individual man may be thought of as the Adam, containing the divine love and shaped by the divine wisdom. He is potentially able to order the world as a vision of that wisdom, but is distracted by the Eve who incites him to appropriation and thus *disorders* his view of his nature, and contends with the impulse of his conscience (the indwelling divinity) to love his fellows. I quote from my earlier account (note that the elder James makes a symbolic use of the contradiction in *Genesis* which tells of the creation of man male and female *before* Eve was fashioned):

> 'When the Eve's phenomenal understanding has built a science which is a complete inversion of divine truth we perceive the self which has contrived the inversion, and the divinity within us is released from bondage. Thereafter we order nature as a true cosmos, an image of God's wisdom, which becomes our own. Man, says the theologian, "has the task and the power divinely given him of subduing all nature to himself, and so leading it back to him from whom it originally comes". With this consummation what may be called the "field" of the creation reaches an equilibrium in the unified consciousness of God and man. What has taken place is a "marriage" of the finite and the infinite: the Adam has broken off his liaison with the Eve and been wholly vivified by the female Adam or divine love; the Eve has been forced to accept the fruits of the divine wisdom. Selfishness gives way to love and science to "spiritual perception" '.

All this sounds remote enough from the novelist. But when we consider the psychological insight with which the theologian treats the stage of the creation (leaving formation and marriage out of account for the moment) the power of the scheme becomes apparent. The conflicts involved must be faced one by one. The theologian did not think that there was any short-cut, emotional or intellectual, to salvation. Sudden conversion amounts to regression. While the Eve and the conscience are struggling a man

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cannot, without becoming a devil or an infant, transcend the limiting conditions of 'identity' (we may substitute 'personality' here). These limiting conditions are absolute self-love or utter abandonment to the love of one's fellows. Gilbert Osmond and Lord Mark of *The Wings of the Dove* are instances of the loss of 'identity' through complete selfishness. Lord Mark, like Osmond, attempts (in the great Bronzino scene) to appropriate the divine love in the form of an image or portrait. The other extreme, a *premature* abandonment to the love of one's fellows makes one morally an infant. (So the elder James described Emerson). We must live out or live through the delusion that we are separate and that we can possess women, wealth, aesthetic 'values' or postage stamps. We steer a course between absolute self-love (the elder James calls it death', and Lord Mark, for example, *is* Death) and a lapse into infancy. The dead man worships himself; the infant is lapped in the divine love and wisdom, 'a mere dimpled nursling of the skies', cared for by his parents and incapable of conscious action. The dynamism of this view of our psychic career and its keen awareness of the personal and social meaning of possessiveness sets it off sharply from other mystical accounts of the nature of man. Although the reader is always aware that the elder James is afraid of the self (or rather, of *himself*) he is at the same time aware that that fear makes him acute.

In fact, his use of these allied ideas, the ideas of the limits or boundaries of identity, and of self-love and love for others as the forms of moral energy, mark him one of the great nineteenth-century naturalists of the self, who like Stendhal and Nietzsche, found intelligibility among the passions, reason in desire. The self is to be destroyed (or put to another use) in the end, but the elder James was no utopian and must acknowledge on his own terms that it is God's device for making us *aware* of our estrangement from him. It is needless to suggest how much the theologian disregarded in the attempt to cobble up an absolute out of his insights. Freud's fortunate alliance with scientific positivism and nineteenth-century liberalism led him to value the self and seek ways of understanding it as an entity. But for the elder James selfhood was the enemy. The interesting consequence is that although we may compare the elder James's selfhood to the ego, his gross, disordered Adam to the id, and his 'God-in-us' to the superego, the struggle in the soul of man has different protagonists: in Freud the ego, and in James the superego. Or, more precisely, there is no question in the Swedenborgian of a balance of conflicting claims; the drama in the soul of man becomes history and has a predetermined conclusion. No new facts can be taken into account because there is no possibility of framing fresh hypotheses. We step with ease from the closed world of the father's theology into the closed world of the son's novels, but in neither case can we find an opening for scientific inquiry.

Before I undertake to give instances of the novelist's use of his father's work a more detailed account of our struggle with the Eve

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is required. Both father and son declare unequivocally that in Europe men are in the ascendant and women subordinate, and that in America the case is reversed. In the elder James the assertion has an explicit technical meaning: the European, incited by his selfhood, lives under the dominion of lust, and subjugates the feminine element in his personality, conscience or 'God-in-us'. In the novelist this technical meaning is symbolically expressed. What has been called the 'international situation' is usually a conflict between the (spiritually) American girl and the (spiritually) European man, or, most generally, a conflict between a person in whom the feminine is uppermost and a person whom the Eve has made the creature of mercenary lusts. It follows that the sex of the novelist's characters is in the first instance, symbolic, and secondarily, or for appearance's sake, realistic. (This may come as a relief to those who have found the relation of men and women in James hard to take). In certain men, and in particular those who are in the true sense artists, the feminine is dominant. These men alone are capable of a marriage which symbolizes the final marriage of appearance and reality, of a marriage that is, in which heart subdues head, and the husband does not subject his wife to a 'gross Adamic servitude', but becomes her adorer.[3]

The artist is the prototype of all those who order the Adam under the aegis of the conscience rather than the Eve. According to the elder James he is 'the only regenerate image of God in nature, the only living revelation of the Lord on earth'. The 'Lord' is a union of God and man, the divine-natural humanity which is to come. The artist is like him because he exhibits, as far as one now can, spiritual individuality. He is known not for what he is, but for what he does. His activity reveals him a 'regenerate image' of God because he orders that revelation of God's nature which is his consciousness under the auspices of the conscience or social self rather than the Eve or selfish self. The true artist is not a person with an 'identity', he is a creative force, recognizable, as the creator himself is recognizable, only in the quality of the thing he makes. To use the terms I have employed above, the artist sees the Adam or the world (these two being identical) as a manifestation of God's wisdom—a chart of his nature. Nature, the Adam, the world, these are names for the 'image' of life—for the deity as manifested in form. In brief, *it is the act of seeing that image as his own which makes man divine.*

In the novels what is traditionally the macrocosm, the realm of material things, simply illustrates the nature of the microcosm. The younger James called his collected works after New York—in both father and son America is the realm of the spiritual or feminine—the site of the New Jerusalem—and illustrated the

[3]The theme of the symbolic meaning of marriage is treated in James's early story, *Travelling Companions*. In addition, this story contains the whole array of symbols which James was to employ many years later in his last three completed novels.

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edition with pictures of London, the realm of appearance. Thus the New York Edition is itself a symbol of the ultimate marriage of appearance and reality—the marriage which is celebrated in *The Golden Bowl*. The artist must be a 'realist', must devote himself to the realm of appearance, in order to make its function as an *image* of reality plain. No man can afford to despise appearance. He must make the right use of it. On this account the elder James thinks the philosophic idealist a moral fool. The regenerate man does not abandon appearance to the unregenerate. But a house, a horse, a rose, are not for him things possessed or desired. They are symbols necessary to the representation of man's divine nature. The 'world' is a congeries of tropes standing for that nature. God has projected himself (we may say) as a work of art, and when we recognize the work for what it is we become divine.

The careful reader of Henry James, the novelist, will have seen that the system I have attempted to sketch is congruent with his temper. (I ought to mention here an essay by William Troy, 'The Altar of Henry James', which emphasizes this temper and even isolates certain symbolic emphases which turn out, on examination, to stem from the elder James).[4] But such a reader will remain doubtful as to how anyone seeing the world as the elder James saw it would be able to take in a very large draught of facts, of social circumstance, of insight into character. I have urged that this was a mysticism with a difference, which took in at one survey so broad a field of human activity and motivation that when one applies it to specific situations as the novelist did the result appeals to one's sense of emotional fact. But the son's own testimony on the question of his father's 'experiential authority' will carry more weight.

> 'If he so endeared himself wasn't it, one asked as time went on, through his never having sentimentalized or merely meditated away, so to call it, the least embarrassment of the actual about him, and having with a passion peculiarly his own kept together his stream of thought, however transcendent and the stream of life however humanized? There was a kind of experiential authority in his basis as he felt his basis—there being no human predicament he couldn't by a sympathy more *like* direct experience than any I have known enter into . . . '
>
> (*Notes of a Son and Brother*).

Perhaps the best way to begin a review of the novelist's uses of what he called 'father's ideas' is to read *The Tragic Muse*. In the character of Gabriel Nash we have a gay and affectionate sketch of Henry James's father at work. For the elder James life consisted keeping together the 'stream of thought' and the 'stream

[4]This essay may be found in F. W. Dupee's collection of James criticism, *The Question of Henry James*.

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of life' or, to use his own terms, endeavouring to marry appearance and reality. Gabriel Nash's credo is a straightforward abstract of the elder James's point of view. Moreover, this novel helps us to avoid the pitfalls of aesthetic positivism which surround the figure of the novelist nowadays. It makes quite explicit the relation between morality and style. Virtue, as I have pointed out, is never a matter of rewards and punishments, sheep and goats. It consists in sinking all one's individual claims in one's love for the image of life. There is only one way to express such a total allegiance, and that is through one's style. Any other form of worship makes the worshipper more important than his worship. Gabriel Nash puts it this way:

> 'Life consists of the personal experiments of each of us and the point of an experiment is that it shall succeed. What we contribute is our treatment of the material, our rendering of the text, our style . . . One has one's form, *que diable*, and a mighty good thing that one has. I'm not afraid of putting all life into mine, and without unduly squeezing it. I'm not afraid of putting in honor and courage and charity—without spoiling them: on the contrary I shall only do them good'.

What we are concerned with is not, however, the novelist's use of 'father's ideas' as ideas, but rather with their transmutation into dramatic and symbolic form. A group of familiar short stories will provide some clues to the way the younger James effected this transmutation. *The Real Thing* gives us a starting point. In this little parable James dramatizes the relationship between morality and style explicitly stated by Gabriel Nash. That so simple a story should be so widely misread is surprising. Yet James must have anticipated the misreading. He knew, that is, that his contemporaries were infatuated with the figure of the artist, and thought art a moral end in itself. He considered such a view of the artist an impiety and a horror, but he nonetheless threw the sops of apparent conformity to an audience which hungrily and blindly snatched them up. This question would take me too far afield, but I must add that the device of seeming to accept widespread errors while covertly controverting them is in entire accordance with the scheme of the elder James. His son may be said to offer us an opportunity for salutary though vicarious moral transgression. We make much of the fate of the artist *as such* in *The Real Thing*. The author apparently expected us to discover our error by experiencing its consequences. We have been slow to do so. In this story the two sets of models are inversions of one another. Major and Mrs. Monarch are, in the elder James's sense, 'dead'. Frozen into the forms prescribed by caste, completely generic and completely incapable of moral spontaneity, they are also, and by the same token, fixed, intractable pictorial 'values'. The man who collects fixed aesthetic values of this sort is a sinner just as the capitalist or the sexually acquisitive male is a sinner. The artist

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of the story sins not simply against art but against himself. To prize Major and Mrs. Monarch is to prize an image of one's own self-righteousness. The cockney girl and the young Italian who comprise the opposed set of models represent the 'ideal thing' because they are morally spontaneous. They may be used to illustrate dramatic situations because they are capable of love for others *unlike* themselves.

The artist of *The Real Thing* saves himself. The devilish hero of *The Author of Beltraffio* does not. He collects fixed aesthetic values and prizes the illusion of materiality, prizes the dense and static, above everything else. He is neatly opposed to his wife whose sense of her own righteousness is *her* chief possession. Between them they kill the child who represents their 'marriage', and James indicates in this way their moral death—they have sought to make a possession of the divinity. *Madame de Mauves* deals with another self-righteous woman whose sin is sharply contrasted with the 'honest natural evils' of which her husband is guilty. Her treasonous betrayal of her American heritage is the worst of sins.

The Figure in the Carpet is not about the nature of the 'figure' (though it seems plain that the allusion is to the system of the elder James) but about the consequences of trying to make truth a possession. To do so is to invert truth, to make it serve one's self-love. Corvick and his wife seize upon the truth for their own ends and die the death of the self-righteous who make the divine love serve their own egoism.

The Jolly Corner recapitulates the dramatic themes set by the elder James's picture of man travelling down a corridor bordered by death and infancy toward the point at which he confronts his selfhood and casts it out. In this story the Eve or other self appears to the hero, the Adam or image of life (rightly viewed by the hero, wrongly by the other self) is represented by a house, and the divine love appears in the person of the haunted man's mistress. These symbolic elements recur in the same unmistakable way in *The Sense of the Past*. Such instances might be multiplied, but a more detailed discussion of three novels must suffice here.

The Ambassadors, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl* were planned as a single poem embracing the history of mankind. They represent three stages in the experience of the race which are paralleled by three stages in the moral career of an individual. In the system of the elder James three 'churches' represent the principal steps in history. The first, the Jewish church, was dominated by the idea of law, of conformity, and hence of righteousness. Our moral infancy is likewise permeated by law, but when we grow up we perceive that to respect law is to respect 'persons', lawgivers, who are distinguished not by their capacity to love or create but by their self-righteousness. With Saint Paul the elder James held that law had been given us that we might see its uselessness. The 'ambassadors' of the first novel may be compared to the Prophets. They misconstrue Europe, the realm of

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appearance. No marriage of appearance and reality can be consummated by the righteous. They are isolated from their fellows.

The second church, that of Christ, is not to be confused with those which bear his name, for they are inversions of the true church. The redeemer is not a unique being, but the divine love at the beck of every man. The historical Christ had an exemplary mission: to show what all men potentially are. The office of this second church is treated in *The Wings of the Dove*. This is the stage in our lives during which we must either confront and cast out self-hood or 'die', that is, worship ourselves. Merton Densher is mankind undergoing regeneration. Under the aegis of his self-hood, Kate Croy, he sets out on a course of monetary and sexual acquisition. But Kate over-reaches herself; she pushes Densher to the brink of a loss of identity, so that he turns to the divine love, Milly Theale. Under her influence he is granted a vision of his other self, the creature he would become were he to appropriate Milly, Lord Mark. To see the consequence of living under Kate's dominion is to free himself of her. At the end of the novel mankind, conscience-stricken, but not yet regenerate, is presented with a forced option. He is offered the kingdoms of the earth (Milly's fortune). To accept would be tantamount to taking Milly at the valuation put upon her by London—to becoming the Lord Mark of the Bronzino scene. He refuses, and this entails a total surrender to love, for his 'identity' or balance between love of self and brotherly love is dependent upon his relationship to Kate Croy, and Kate is the bride of appearance, not reality. At the end Densher is mankind spontaneous, or morally free, but not yet united with his fellows and the divinity in the divine-natural humanity.

The marriage of appearance and reality is celebrated in *The Golden Bowl*. A full account of the symbolism of this novel would require a volume, but the reader who has the patience to hunt will find it relatively easy to sort out the principal relationships. The book has to do with the coming of the New Jerusalem (American City). In a sense it recapitulates the two preceding novels, for the psychological and cosmological scheme is fixed. For example, selfhood reappears as Charlotte Stant, and the tie between Maggie Verver (divine love) and Adam Verver (divine wisdom) is essentially that between Milly Theale and Sir Luke Strett.

Before the third or New Church can arise in America Prince Amerigo, the world or the disordered Adam, must break off his liaison with selfhood and marry divine love. Prince Amerigo must, in other words, not simply be *thought* to have discovered America, he must actually do so by subordinating himself to Maggie. With his selfhood the senses (Colonel Assingham) and the intellect (Mrs. Assingham) are allied. Mrs. Assingham's interest lies in the maintenance of the realm of appearance, or, to use James's analogy from society, 'keeping up appearances'. The so-called marriages which she thinks she has 'made' must persist. They are representative lies, standing for the whole mass of delusions which beset mankind under the reign of selfhood. If the truth about these

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marriages becomes known appearance, the lie, will dissolve. Nothing will be left save truth. If the divine wisdom is *not* characterized by selfishness (as Jehovah is, according to the elder James, or as Adam Verver is when tied to the grasping Charlotte Stant) and divine love is *not* subject to 'gross Adamic servitude' as Maggie is subject to Amerigo, the senses and the intellect must, as far as they can see, shut up shop. The state, the ecclesiasticism masquerading as a church, capitalism, lust itself, must all disappear for they are built on these very assertions.

By an ironic turn borrowed from his father Henry James makes Mrs. Assingham, the intellect, defeat herself and the selfhood she serves. She breaks the golden bowl, a symbol of man united to his selfhood (the foot being the senses, the stem the intellect, and the cup the selfhood which holds our delusive acquisitions), with a result quite contrary to her intention. Prince Amerigo sees his other self in the golden bowl, just as Densher had seen the meaning of his act realized in Lord Mark, and invites Maggie's aid. Maggie meets the fury of Amerigo's dispossessed selfhood with self-sacrificing love. Charlotte has no delusions to live upon. Everywhere she turns she is confronted by love and wisdom. She is led off in a silken halter to become the cicerone of the temple of the divine-natural humanity. Appearance, the sum of all the objects of art which *represent* the divinity, is to be housed in America, the spiritual realm. The 'ideal thing' and the 'real thing' have been united, and the Principino will inherit the earth.

QUENTIN ANDERSON.

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PROFESSOR CHADWICK AND ENGLISH STUDIES:

COMMENTS

The following communications, interestingly dissentient, have been received.

Dear Sirs,

H. M. Chadwick was obviously an inspiring teacher, and it is good to have an appreciation of him and his work from a pupil. At the same time I think certain questions are being confused which repay sorting out. I shall try to start from the most specialized ones, and work up to those likely to be of more interest to readers of *Scrutiny*.

1. Compulsory philology (in the strict sense). Your contributor quotes Chadwick himself on the place of this in linguistic studies 'it is no more necessary for the study of Anglo-Saxon than it is for that of Latin or Greek or a modern foreign language'. Excellent; then we have in principle got this particular obstacle cleared out of the way. (Chadwick would no doubt have admitted some attention to philology in so far as it facilitates the *empirical* study of a language). The point is, then, to ask whether study of philology is in fact required even when there is no compulsory Old and Middle parts of the predominantly literary Course III in the Oxford English School. Where the evangelizing zeal of individual tutors may drive them to is another matter.

2. If, then, Anglo-Saxon does not necessarily mean philology, what about Anglo-Saxon in general? Chadwick, as quoted by your contributor, goes on to this, arguing primarily 'in the interests of Anglo-Saxon studies'. It is clear that there need be no quarrel with the positive side of Chadwick's contention—that Anglo-Saxon can profitably be studied 'in association with the early history and antiquities of the country', and your contributor's testimony shows what a success Chadwick made of this, as an élite School. But the contention that this is the only proper context for such studies is more disputable. Chadwick's view that English studies 'do not afford a good training for [Anglo-Saxon studies]' may be sound, but can hardly be conclusive for those whose primary interest is in the question whether the study of Anglo-Saxon language and literature has anything proportionate to the time spent on it to contribute to English studies. And when he writes: 'For Anglo-Saxon studies some inclination for the acquisition of languages and a wider historical outlook are desirable; English studies are too limited in their scope', one is surprised to find the reader of *Scrutiny*

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acquiescing in the implied judgment on the type of mind to which English studies appeal.

3. If we turn to direct consideration of the place of Anglo-Saxon in an English School, Chadwick's main contentions seem to be two-fold: (i) the literary interest is 'not so great as to repay students of modern literature for the time they will have to spend in acquiring a sufficient mastery of the language to appreciate it'; (ii) that (as implied above) the proper way to study Anglo-Saxon is in the context of Germanic and Celtic antiquities. The first of these is an important point, in which it is perhaps fair to distinguish quality and quantity. Anyone who studies Anglo-Saxon with the hope of finding in it a really large body of literature conspicuously worth reading for its own sake would no doubt be disappointed, and in fact the specialist will go on to set his Anglo-Saxon in the context of the studies which Chadwick recommends, but I think that there is a strong case for saying that the relatively small body of work which the average literary student reads in his Anglo-Saxon studies is of considerable literary interest—Chadwick himself holds (*The Study of Anglo-Saxon*, p. xi) that 'a good deal of the literature is very interesting and attractive'—certainly enough to make it worth while if it also contributes to the profitable study of the later literature. This first contention of Chadwick's views are highly controversial—they are not an acknowledged axiom of Anglo-Saxon scholars, which they have agreed to keep dark in order to retain Anglo-Saxon in English syllabuses. Chadwick's views are intimately linked with his judgments on such matters as the relative importance of pagan and Christian elements in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and here, one would think, the literary student may have his contribution to make, and may, even if he is primarily a student of later literature, profit by addressing himself to the problems. There are certainly questions of literary criticism involved, and if the student of English leaves them severely alone it is not at all certain that they will be tackled at all. Your contributor *may* be right in suggesting that it is 'hypocritical pretence' to study *Beowulf* as 'great poetry'; but one is hardly in a position to decide whether it is great poetry or not if one assumes that the only alternative to Chadwick's approach is to ' "get up" Anglo-Saxon as a meaningless adjunct to mediaeval and modern English literature'. Note the begging of the question about continuity in Chadwick's favour in the assumption that *Beowulf* does not belong in any intelligible sense to mediaeval English literature. It would be a pity to concentrate on Chadwick's plea for the place of Anglo-Saxon in the study of the Heroic Age to such a degree as to ignore Professor Tolkien's equally eloquent plea (*Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*) for attention to *Beowulf* as a poem. I do not say that this by any means established the case for compulsory Anglo-Saxon in English Schools, but I claim that it is rash to assume that *the* right way to treat *Beowulf* is as 'an interesting document'.

4. So we come back at last to the question of compulsion. This is not my main topic, and on balance my sympathies are with

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the opponents of compulsion: I think it ought to be possible to give Anglo-Saxon its place among a set of alternatives grouped round a nucleus of English studies. At the same time, I think both Chadwick and your contributors exaggerate the extent to which Anglo-Saxon is felt to be burdensome and unprofitable. I do not think it is just by dint of leading questions and intimidation that I elicit the view from a surprisingly high proportion of undergraduates whose main interest is in more recent literature that, while they found Anglo-Saxon irksome at first (and still feel that it takes up rather too much time), and which they would not have chosen it spontaneously, they find a genuine and distinctive interest in *Beowulf* at least. And this is not confined to those with a very marked scholarly bent. Chadwick's methods, your correspondent admits, 'assumed that the student had special aptitudes'. Well and good; but I think it is a mistake to assume that Anglo-Saxon studies are entirely useless except for students with such aptitudes, and, even for them, useless in the context of predominantly literary studies.

Yours sincerely,

J. C. MAXWELL.

Dear Sirs,

To those of us who are more particularly concerned about the present state of the study of mediaeval English literature the appreciation of the late Professor Chadwick in the last number of *Scrutiny* was most inspiriting. It not only testified to the ability of a great teacher to see (and so to inspire his pupils to discover) the meaning of a subject. It also emphasized in relation to what, in what context Anglo-Saxon studies may be discovered to have meaning. That context was not, for Professor Chadwick, English literature. His remarkable achievement therefore supports the feeling that Anglo-Saxon has been persistently, by an uncritical pressure, forced into the wrong context. In the context of the study of early European civilizations Anglo-Saxon comes to life. Into the organic whole which mediaeval and modern English literature combine to compose, Anglo-Saxon will not, however much we strain, fit naturally.

The recurrences of alliterative poetry in mediaeval English are frequently pointed to as evidence of its continuity with Anglo-Saxon. But the differences are much more radical than the resemblances. *Piers Plowman* and *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knight* are in their different ways poetry of a community which is already the English community of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. The Anglo-Saxon world is by comparison a quite alien world, however we may stretch and strain to get it into line with Chaucer's and Shakespeare's. *Piers Plowman* and *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knight* are not accidentally contemporary with Chaucer, and have an immediate relevance for the student of English which Anglo-Saxon can hardly have. It is unlikely to be disputed that the great central core of the English tradition was created between

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Chaucer and the eighteenth century. By those generations the very existence of Anglo-Saxon poetry had been forgotten, whereas there was an extraordinary consciousness of Latin, French and Italian. It is Latin, French and Italian that have the first claims to relevance for the serious student of English literature. I have not been able to discern that the nineteenth-century boosting of Anglo-Saxon has made any appreciable difference to nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.

The intrinsic value of Anglo-Saxon poetry as poetry is in some dispute. My own experience has been that the *Seafarer*, the *Wanderer*, some of Cynewulf and one or two of the *Riddles* have, as poetry, the enjoyment of their own peculiar character to offer. But it may be very seriously doubted whether the time taken up in learning Anglo-Saxon on the chance of ultimately capturing the excitement of this novelty is time wisely taken away from students who are far from having yet mastered the central meanings of their own mind and civilization as presented in its supreme expressions. My own impression is that in any one of the masterpieces of Shakespeare—*Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *A Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*—in any single one of these there is incomparably more meaning, demanding an incomparably greater exercising and disciplining of the mind for its apprehension, than in the whole of Anglo-Saxon literature put together.

It may further be doubted whether the study at present known as Anglo-Saxon is at all compatible with a study the relevant discipline of which is the literary critical. In practice the Anglo-Saxon specialist teacher and the philologist have hitherto nearly always been one. Promises to treat in future Anglo-Saxon literature as literature may well be regarded with scepticism by whoever contemplates how firmly implanted is this philological habit in the teaching of Anglo-Saxon.

Still, that is a relatively unimportant misfortune in comparison with the way in which the Anglo-Saxon specialist and philologist has been allowed to annex the study of mediaeval English literature —or, more exactly, to suppress it. The result is that the student has now got to hack his way through a jungle of philological and other 'scholarly' irrelevance to get at our superb (and for students of English literature as a whole immediately relevant) mediaeval poetry at all. The depressing technique is to interpose extrinsic points of 'interest' as obstacles between the student and the thing itself. Attention is focussed on these external 'difficulties'. Explanation is entirely explanation of them, never of the thing itself. The whole trend of examinations in so-called Middle English and of editions of texts (the *raison d'être* of many of which appears to be merely to provide for the examinations) is to perpetuate this riveting of attention on these interposed obstacles and to distract attention from the meaning, which was the poet's own object and should be ours. A glance at the London English Honours Degree Examination papers over the last ten or twenty years will confirm this. It is typical how in these examinations Chaucer, who is as

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central for mediaeval England as Dante is for mediaeval Italy, gets pushed into a corner as if no more important than the *Ormulum*.

As for the editions of the texts, by no means the worst example is Tolkien and Gordon's barbarous edition of one of the supreme English poems, *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knight*. This is the edition in which young students are generally presented with this masterpiece. The deficiencies, confusions and inconsistencies of the copyist's spelling in the M. S. Cotton Nero IX are slavishly reproduced so that they are what first repel the eye and persistently distract the attention of the fresh reader. Nor is any inkling to be gained from the introduction or notes that here, at hand, is one of the supreme *meanings* in English. The meaning of a great poem being the most difficult thing in the world to grasp, why this interposition of external obstacles—unless indeed the meaning is felt to be a reality too disturbing to be borne, and to be evaded at all costs?

Middle English studies thus present as a whole the appearance of an elaborate irrelevance that is also an elaborate obscuration and evasion of meaning. These studies, tacked on as they have been in practice to Anglo-Saxon and Philology, have for long been known as 'linguistic' studies. In what sense is a study of language that is dissociated from a study of meanings—of what the words in conjunction do—a study of language at all? The study of language in action—of language meaning something—is literary criticism. The need is for literary criticism to undertake the direct rescue of our supremely valuable (and for us immediately relevant) mediaeval literature.

Yours sincerely,

REDBRICK.

THE CRITICAL REVIEW TO-DAY

PROLEGOMENA TO A HISTORICAL INQUIRY

I.

SHORTLY before the recent war *The Times Literary Supplement* published, under the title *Our Present Discontents*, a series of articles surveying the general state of letters in the contemporary world. Quoting from a variety of distinguished people in this country and abroad, the anonymous author showed that there was a widespread disquiet at the tendency for literature to become a large-scale industry. He reached the pessimistic conclusions that literature as an art or intellectual activity was dead or dying, that the standards of taste of a cultivated public had been submerged in the demands of the new reading masses for

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entertainment and that there was now little inducement to write anything which did not answer this immediate purpose, or alternatively serve some non-literary cause (financial, political or ideological). Among other illustrations of these points, he instanced the decline of the serious literary periodical, pointing out that the demands of circulation (as a means to attract the advertisements on which periodicals increasingly depend) prevented even the most high-minded editor from doing much to improve the present state of letters—'a state that would have revolted Henley and appalled the great Croker'. 'And with what feelings, he continued, can we in England, once the home and now the grave of the great reviews, read these words of M. Duhamel?—

> "The reviews are indispensable to the intellectual equilibrium of the countries that to-day guard our civilization . . . Continuity of thought, creative meditation, active study, can only be preserved with the help of the literary reviews that survive . . . The disappearance of even one review, just now, when intelligence is being restricted in its functions, would be a misfortune" '.

In the correspondence which followed these articles the state of reviewing and the literary periodical were discussed by Mr. Jonathan Cape, from the point of view of the publisher, and by Mr. J. Middleton Murry from that of the man of letters. Mr. Cape said that the reviewer and the editor were alike forced to consider the demands of a 'massive million public just able to read but not equipped to understand literature as a means of communication': at the same time he deplored the lack of general standards among reviewers—'they do not judge the handling of the theme, but address their task from some personal angle, moral, political, or whatever it may be'. Mr. Murry remarked on the almost complete disappearance of professional reviewing and estimated that since 1914 the market for serious criticism had diminished by at least three-quarters. The result was a dearth of criticism by which an author could profit:

> 'My first book, the work of a completely unknown author twenty-three years ago, received more substantial, positive and helpful criticism than did my last but one . . . At the outside I can reckon on the sustained attention of a half-dozen reviewers, and half of these will be unable, for lack of space, to say what they really want to say . . . Whether this indubitable decay of reviewing portends an absolute shrinkage in the critical audience for literature I cannot positively say. But it seems to me probable that it does . . . What seems to be established is that most of the people who do buy books no longer care to form their opinions from a comparative study of book-reviews'.

The complaint that in our time the public for serious periodical literature has been small and has tended to grow smaller can be confirmed by a glance at the history of the chief literary reviews

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and magazines since 1918.

Of the old politico-literary quarterlies, *The Edinburgh* came to an end in 1929. *The Quarterly* has survived, with *The Fortnightly, The Contemporary* and *The Nineteenth Century and After*, but none of these can be said to count for much in criticism and their circulations are small. *The English Review* and *The National Review* became almost exclusively political, and joined forces shortly before the 1939 war. The older magazines carried on in much the same way as the reviews: *Blackwood's* and *The Cornhill* had long since become miscellanies mainly devoted to fiction, with no critical influence. (*The Cornhill* died in 1939, but was revived in 1944 under Mr. Peter Quennell as a literary magazine somewhat similar to *Horizon*).

Of the quarterlies and monthlies founded since 1918, few have reached more than a moderate circulation and most have had a hard struggle to survive: in general the more serious and severe in their critical standards have had the worst of it commercially. *The London Mercury*, founded in 1919 by Sir John (then Mr. J. C.) Squire as a three-shilling monthly, was always catholic in its tastes and by no means high-brow. It reached at one time a circulation of 10,000, but in 1932 it was obliged to reduce its price to 1/- and plead for more regular subscribers. In 1934 it absorbed *The Bookman* (a popularizing magazine of *belles-lettres*, founded in the 'nineties) and the editorship passed to Mr. R. A. Scott-James. By 1939 it had itself been absorbed by *Life and Letters To-day*, which still exists as a small monthly, the successor of the quarterly founded by Mr. Desmond McCarthy in 1929. *The Adelphi*, founded by Mr. J. Middleton Murry in 1923, reached a sale of about 4,000 as a shilling monthly: this dropped to 1,700 during the three years from 1927 to 1930 when it ran as a half-crown quarterly but rose again when it reverted to the monthly form. During the 'thirties it declined into a thin sixpenny monthly of rather less critical interest, and it has survived the war as a small-circulation subscription magazine. *The Criterion*, founded in 1922 by Mr. T. S. Eliot on the model of the more substantial Continental reviews, appeared quarterly at 7/6, a price which considerably restricted its possible public. Despite its authority and the wide respect in which it was held, its circulation cannot have been large: its change to the monthly form (1927-8) and back again suggests commercial difficulties. It came to an end in January, 1939. *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, whose brilliant life under Mr. Edgell Rickword and Mr. Douglas Garman lasted only from 1925 to 1928,[1] preferred

[1]Its two and a half years, first as quarterly and then as monthly, yielded, besides the volume of selections *Towards Standards of Criticism*, edited by F. R. Leavis, *A pamphlet against Anthologies* by Laura Riding and Robert Graves, *Anonymity* by E. M. Forster, part of *Transition*, by Edwin Muir, and the two volumes of *Scrutinies*, edited by Edgell Rickword. It also published some of D. H. Lawrence's best short stories and criticism.

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to give up from lack of support rather than continue on a subsidized basis or sacrifice its independence by adopting a political programme. *Scrutiny*, an independent critical review with explicit educational interests, has appeared quarterly since 1932. It has been able to draw on the livelier members of the academic and teaching world for both supporters and contributors, but its circulation is small,[2] and its economic position may be gauged from the announcement in the first number that no payment would be made for contributions. Among the few other periodicals (other than weeklies) in which one could hope to find serious criticism during the 'thirties, and which did not survive the war, may be mentioned *Purpose* and the Catholic *Colosseum*. *Arena*, run by a group which broke away from *The Colosseum*, appeared for only four numbers. It is true that among those still with us there is *Horizon*, founded in 1939, but although it has occasionally published critical essays of note, *Horizon* has no great authority and no clear critical policy, while its review section is small. Similar comments might be made on *New Writing*, which has achieved a high circulation in its Penguin form.

The weeklies show the same developments: the best of them disappeared from lack of support or were able to survive only by amalgamation with inferior papers. In 1919 there were at least six weeklies publishing criticism of a high standard: *The Spectator*, *The Nation*, *The Saturday Review*, *The New Statesman*, *The Athenaeum* and *The New Age*. It is perhaps significant that the first to succumb was the purely literary organ, *The Athenaeum*, after a brilliant two years from 1919 to 1921 under the editorship of Mr. Murry.[3] But in 1921 *The Athenaeum* became merely a department of *The Nation*, and in 1930 *The Nation* itself was absorbed by *The New Statesman*. Meanwhile *The Saturday Review* had been succeeded by *The Week-end Review* which ran from 1930 to 1934 under Mr. Gerald Barry until it, too, was taken over by *The New Statesman*, which thus stands in the place of four earlier journals. To-day *The New Statesman* and *The Spectator* practically divide the weekly field between them: there are also

[2][The sale is small, the circulation much wider. Owing to the dearth of paper we are able at present to print only 1000 copies of each issue. There is a long queue of would-be subscribers, and shop-sales have to be restricted to virtual insignificance. We have good reason for believing that the total sale could be multiplied by four or five immediately.—Editors].

[3]During these two years it published many of the essays subsequently reprinted in Professor Santayana's *Soliloquies in England*, Mr. Murry's *Aspects of Literature*, Mr. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood*, and Roger Fry's *Vision and Design*. At the same time it kept a vigilant eye on contemporary work: no modern weekly reviewer subjects the younger writers to the kind of scrutiny directed by Mr. Murry upon the Georgian poets or by Katherine Mansfield upon the novelists of the day.

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Time and Tide and *The New English Weekly*, a successor to *The New Age*, but these are less influential, and even if we add the B.B.C.'s *The Listener*, which is only incidentally literary, the sum total of critical weeklies hardly equals in weight and effectiveness that of 1919. *The Times Literary Supplement* continues, of course, and largely from the fact that it provides a list of almost all published works and is therefore indispensable to booksellers and the academic world, it reaches (or reached fifteen years ago—I take the figure from *Fiction and the Reading Public*) a sale of over 30,000. But it is a less serious critical journal than in 1919. For a time after its change of format in the 'thirties it cultivated a more popular manner, with shorter reviews and a greater proportion of mere literary gossip: more recently it has tended to revert towards its earlier solidity. As for the low-priced literary weeklies of the type of *John o' London's*, these are not merely popular in manner, popularization being their avowed aim, but their tendency is hardly to combat anti-'highbrow' prejudice.

'When I enumerate the periodicals that I read regularly, and the opinions of which I take seriously', wrote Mr. Eliot in one of the last numbers of *The Criterion*, 'I find that with the exception of *The Times* they are all periodicals of considerably smaller circulation than either *The Spectator* or *The New Statesman* . . . So far as culture depends upon periodicals . . . it depends on periodicals which do not make a profit'.[4] To-day, in fact, it is no longer possible to assume a substantial public for serious criticism, and a literary periodical has to begin by rallying the public that it believes to be potentially available. Alternatively it becomes the representative of a small group more or less out of touch with other groups and with any common centre of critical opinion, kept together only by some non-literary allegiance, political, economic, psychological, philosophical, or of some more eccentric nature. The present tendency towards a proliferation of little reviews, magazines and miscellanies representing groups of this kind is not merely the effect of wartime restrictions; it had been growing for several years before 1939, as can be seen from Mr. Denys Val Baker's survey, *Little Reviews* 1919-1943. It is not, of course, that all these publications are devoid of merit, or that some of them do not include genuine criticism upon occasion, but taken as a whole they are symptomatic of the disintegration of the literary public into

[4]In the last days of *The Athenaeum* Mr. Murry had commented that a journal devoting considerable space to criticism of the highest quality could not command 'the enormous circulation necessary in order that the advertisement rates may be advanced automatically *pari passu* with the increased expenditure. It is an unfortunate fact . . . that the number of people who will pay, say, twopence a week solely for criticism which they consider good is at the outside about fifty thousand. If it costs one shilling a week the figures would drop immediately to the neighbourhood of 10,000'.
The Economics of It, Athenaeum, 1920, p. 329.

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a number of coteries acknowledging no common standards and possessing no common critical language. The serious literary periodical to-day cannot hope for any great influence or authority and has for the most part a hard struggle to survive.

If the commercial difficulties of the literary periodical at the present day are simple matter of fact, there is equal evidence of an associated decline in the standard of reviewing. The article by Mr. Eliot quoted above (which appeared just before the discussion in the *Times Literary Supplement*) doubted whether good criticism was compatible with commercial success:

> 'I question whether, in these days, the highest level of criticism can be hoped for in periodicals of more than a very small circulation. Beyond a point, the deterioration is first apparent by the inclusion of books not worth reviewing: later, in the quality of the reviews themselves. I am speaking, of course, not of the highest level of the best reviewer, but of the general standard of a periodical. And I doubt whether a high standard can be expected from any paper to which the popularity of its reviews is of commercial importance'.

In 1939 Virginia Woolf devoted a pamphlet to the subject, concluding that criticism and reviewing had diverged so widely that the modern reviewer had ceased to have any real value either to the author or to the public. She went so far as to advocate his abolition in favour of a system of professional critical consultants, and suggested that this might lead to a new relationship between author and critic.

But complaints about the state of reviewing were frequent long before 1939. In 1921 we find A. C. Clutton-Brock beginning an article in *The Nation and Athenaeum*[5] with the blunt statement: 'I am writing to say in print what all writers assume in private, that most reviews are worthless, and what some may deny, that they are growing worse with the general deterioration of the Press'. The incompetence and futility of the newspaper reviews, he said, were affecting criticism in periodicals of more serious pretensions. In the previous year *The Athenaeum* had published several articles on the subject, including a leader deploring the growing shyness of critical severity[6] and a complaint from Mr. Swinnerton[7] of the 'enforced disingenuousness of modern reviewing' ('One may not explicitly say in any paper, for example, until he is dead, that a writer is an inefficient writer'). Mr. Murry himself wrote on the economic difficulties of the reviewer.[8] He pointed out that the smaller space given to literature in the daily and weekly press had reduced the reviewer's possible income, while the increase in the number

[5] February 19th, 1921, p. 692.
[6] *The Critics' New Year*, August 27th, 1920, p. 261.
[7] *The Difficulties of Criticism*, May 21st, 1920, p. 661.
[8] *The Economics of It*, March 12th, 1920, p. 329.

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of books to be dealt with caused his work to deteriorate. 'The book reviewer', he said, 'is being crushed out of existence, and the longer he survives the worse will his work become'.[9] This judgment was corroborated by Mr. Swinnerton some years later in his *Authors and the Book Trade*:[10] 'It is work from which a man who does nothing but reviewing cannot possibly derive an adequate income. The consequence is that the ordinary reviewer is usually either a hack or an amateur'. Elsewhere in the same book a more serious charge is made:

> 'The greatest obstacle, I think, to sincere and disinterested reviewing in this as in other countries is what may be indicated as the dinner-party habit. Literary freemasonries are the devil . . . When, at a dinner-party, a reviewer meets an author, a false relationship is at once established . . . Most London reviewers are themselves authors. In the same way, the author met at dinner is likely to be a reviewer. If he has been praised, he will be affable to the praiser; if blamed or ignored, his sensitiveness is such that he may use the weapon that comes nearest to his hand—another, and retaliatory, review. Thus are feuds manufactured. Not only that, but the feud may extend to gang warfare'.

Mr. Swinnerton accused the literary weeklies of being dominated by a coterie system which was 'propagandist, partial and mean'. These comments are to be accepted as those of a successful man of letters writing from a point of view in no sense 'highbrow' or Utopian. A comment typical of the attitude of critics accustomed to judge from the severest standards may be seen in Mr. B. L. Higgins's article in *The Calendar* on *Euthanasia, or the Future of Criticism*:[11]

> 'Everybody realizes that, with the increase in the popularization of literature, its dissemination comes under the same control, economic and political, that governs the distribution of foodstuffs. With few exceptions, only with varying degrees of compromise, the journals concerned follow the commercial necessity of deferring about their choice of review books, about the length—and often the tone—of the reviews, to the neighbouring columns of publishers' advertisements. The integrity of individual criticism, of course, does not suffer directly from the mechanism to which it ministers, though the usual literary supplement has no right to the title it boasts, since the non-literary design to which the parts are subordinate is bound to violate the proper literary proportions, and the purely receptive

[9]Even so optimistic an observer as Mr. Gerald Gould admitted in his contribution to *The Book World* (1935) that a great deal of reviewing was now a non-remunerative trade.
[10]Published in 1935.
[11]Reprinted in *Towards Standards of Criticism*, p. 160.

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reader carries away a wrong general impression, a false lesson in values. Perhaps a more noteworthy result of the popularizing mechanism is its effect on the critic-popularizer. From Dryden to Jeffrey and from Jeffrey to Mr. Squire, are two big jumps; and the conclusion cannot be avoided that the literary representtatives of the people degenerate as the constituency increases . . . The real corrupters of literary criticism are the Mensheviks of our transitional period . . . This attitude takes various forms and covers a large area of very respectable print. Its distinguishing marks are a confusion of social with literary qualities; a hatred of unqualified statements; a hunger for "personal touches"; an ambition to extend a welcome to "all sorts" of writing, ostensibly out of a desire for comprehensiveness, really with the motive to justify a mixed standard; finally an over-insistence on the empirical nature of our present aesthetic judgments.

The process of popularizing referred to here produced the star-reviewer system associated especially with the name of Arnold Bennett. As the newspapers came to exploit more and more the vast public of the half-educated masses, they at first cut down the space given to criticism, but they discovered later that books could be news and that reviewing could easily be assimilated to the process of Giving the Public what it Wants. In a vein of hearty forthrightness Bennett communicated his opinions and prejudices to the readers of *The Evening Standard* to such effect that he could make a best-seller overnight of a book which had until then been almost unnoticed.[12] The system soon spread to other newspapers, with the obvious result that this kind of reviewing became more and more a matter of anticipating the tastes and flattering the prejudices of a large half-educated public indifferent to traditional critical standards. The proprietors of newspapers and the publishers who advertised in them were not concerned with the protests of 'highbrow' critics at the general levelling-down of taste: no such considerations were necessary to complete the commercial cycle. It is therefore not surprising that reviewers became more and more assimilated into this scheme and that their work grew increasingly similar to ordinary journalism and advertisement copywriting, with the same spurious liveliness and meaningless superlatives.

A typical protest against the system appears in Mr. Wyndham Lewis's *Men Without Art*, published in the middle 'thirties:

> 'That highly paid experts should (with gloves on and heavily masked) examine these masses of written matter weekly and appropriately report upon them in a newspaper no one could object to: if they said "This is the goods, you will like *this*" all would be well. It is when people possessing, rightly or wrongly,

[12]See the account of the sales of Miss Phoebe Fenwick Gaye's *Vivandière*, for example, quoted from *The Evening Standard* in *For Continuity*, by F. R. Leavis, p. 26.

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> a great position in the literature of their very important country, are employed, at portentous salaries, to write weekly about these products in the way that they do—lavishing upon them all the resources of their critical vocabularies—a vocabulary acquired for the appraisement of such tremendous works as *War and Peace*, or *L'Education Sentimentale*, that there is something that stinks horribly in the State of Denmark and that it is more than time to call a halt.

The star system in its true form declined during the years immediately before the 1939 war, but it can hardly be said that there was any improvement in the standard of reviewing as a whole. As Clutton-Brock had prophesied earlier, the debasement of critical currency affected periodicals of more serious literary pretensions. The war brought many modifications, especially in the form of restrictions on the space of both reviews and advertisements, but the situation to-day is very much what it was in 1939 when Mr. Eliot and Mrs. Woolf made their protests and *The Times Literary Supplement* published its pessimistic survey.

One correspondent who took exception to this pessimism made the typical objection that the present state of affairs was really no worse than that prevailing at any time in the past. The author of *Our Present Discontents* had referred to the great reviews of the nineteenth century: Mr. G. B. Harrison retorted by instancing their notorious critical mistakes:

> 'When we remember how Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats were received by the guardians of "true standards" we need not share the pessimism of your correspondent that literature will soon be extinct. Nor need we take him too seriously.

In his J. M. Dent Memorial Lecture for 1939, *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books*, Mr. Swinnerton took up a somewhat similar position. It is the business of historical inquiry to answer the question whether the present state of reviewing and the critical periodical is abnormal or not, and to examine the evidence for the contention that things were always much the same.

II.

THE IDEA OF A LITERARY PERIODICAL

It is characteristic of the state of affairs outlined above that the modern critic can take very little for granted. He is continually driven to discuss fundamental problems which call for solution before he can begin his specific task. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that the founders of serious periodicals during the last thirty years have devoted much thought to the ideal function of the literary review. A consideration of some of their manifestos and statements of policy may help to establish some agreed common principles.

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Writing in *The Criterion* for July, 1923, Mr. Eliot asserted that a review 'should maintain the application, in literature, of principles which have their consequences also in politics and private conduct: and it should maintain them without tolerating any confusion of the purposes of pure literature with the purposes of politics or ethics'. A more extended discussion in the first number of *The New Criterion* (January, 1926) pointed out that a review must be more than a miscellany, and underlined its representative function:

> 'A review which depends merely on its editor's vague conception of good and bad has manifestly no critical value. A review should be an organ of documentation. That is to say, the bound volumes of a decade should represent the development of the keenest sensibility and the clearest thought of ten years'.

It should not, on the other hand, simply propagate the ideas of one man or of a small group. The ideal is a tendency (rather than a programme) residual from the play of the individual opinions of the editor and contributors. The material included should be neither too miscellaneous nor governed by too narrow a conception of literature: it must deal with 'what we may suppose to be the interests of any person with literary tastes'. Above all, the literary review 'must protect its disinterestedness, must avoid the temptation ever to appeal to any social, political or theological prejudices'. A year later the function of the review as a vehicle for opinion was further stressed—'Not for the haphazard opinion of a miscellaneous group of writers, or for the opinion of an individual or for the drilled opinion of a school or order, but for the various, divergent, or even contradictory opinion of a widening group of individuals in communication'. The first number of the monthly series (May, 1927) spoke of aiming to revive some of the 'leisure, ripeness and thoroughness' of the quarterly reviews of a hundred years ago, together with 'another of their characteristics, a certain corporate personality which had almost disappeared from contemporary journalism': on the reversion to the quarterly form (June, 1928) there was a note on the need for conscious opposition to modern reading habits—'if the quarterly review seems obsolete to the popular mind, that is perhaps a sign that the quarterly review is more needed now than ever, and that it is ahead of the times rather than behind them. Something should surely be provided for those minds which are still capable of attention, thought and feeling, as well as for those who turn to a literary review as they would glance at the picture-page or social column of a daily paper . . .'

The Calendar of Modern Letters began by deprecating any preconceived statement of policy, remarking that the readers of a paper have a share in the formation of its individuality. There may be at first some ideal reader in mind (not necessarily one with whom the editors share any particular set of admirations or beliefs) but 'as this hypothesis is corrected by the reality, the balance is

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adjusted into an unpredictable harmony'. Critical severity was an explicit aim of *The Calendar,* and it invoked a tradition assumed to be still at least potentially alive:

> 'In reviewing we shall base our statements on the standards of criticism, since it is only then that one can speak plainly without offence, or give praise with meaning'.

Like *The Criterion, The Calendar* looked back with respect to the reviews of a century before:

> 'There is no longer a body of opinion so solid as that represented by *The Quarterly, The Edinburgh* and *Blackwood's*. The fact that they pronounced a vigorous aesthetic creed, and were, therefore, of the greatest benefit to a lively interest in poetry, is forgotten because they were sometimes ungentlemanly'.

The editors of *The Calendar,* that is, conceived its function as the re-creation, on however small a scale, of some comparable body of opinion; it was to be a centre round which a public acknowledging common standards might be rallied, the expression of a truly contemporary sensibility, and a focus of resistance to the prevailing cultural disintegration. The *Valediction* of the last number said that the obvious step for a periodical wishing to survive was to adopt a 'political' attitude—'one, that is, which implies a tendency to judge by expediency'—and gave as the reason for refusing this step that it would mean the loss of freedom to exercise an independent judgment on contemporary work:

> 'The value of a review must be judged by its attitude to the living literature of the time (which includes such works of the past as can be absorbed by the contemporary sensibility) and there should naturally be some homogeneity of view among the more regular contributors'.

The question remained, however, whether this homogeneity was something vital and real or merely the acceptance of a body of dogma or of the prejudices of one superior mind. Judged by this ideal standard the editors of *The Calendar* did not claim to be free from censure.

A similar preoccupation with the problem of bringing together a public sharing common standards appears in the manifesto published in the first number of *Scrutiny*. Assuming that 'the general dissolution of standards is a commonplace' and taking it as axiomatic that 'concern for standards of living implies concern for standards in the arts', the editors asserted that the first duty was 'to publish good criticism judiciously directed':

> 'And inseparable from this is a conscious critical policy if anything is to be effected in the present state of culture. For to-day there are anti-highbrow publics and "modernist" publics, but there is no public of Common Readers with whom the critic can rejoice to concur'.

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Scrutiny was to provide a focus of intellectual interests, a means of organizing the scattered minority 'for whom the arts are something more than a luxury product', who believe 'that there is a necessary relationship between the quality of the individual's response to art and his general fitness for a humane existence'.

These statements of policy are concerned with the special difficulties of the critical periodical in the modern world, but they point towards an ideal function of which it may be valuable to attempt some general summary. In a nation-wide reading public the critical review should provide a focus of critical discussion—that 'current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power' which Arnold desiderated as the necessary condition of a healthy culture and which formerly existed in the conversation and personal contacts of a small and compact society.[13] It must be a clearing-house of opinion for a body of readers all showing a disinterested concern for 'the pursuit of true judgment' and a knowledge of 'the best that is known and thought in the world'. There will be room for individual estimates of works and authors to differ widely, but from the exchange and interplay of opinion certain common assumptions will emerge which it is the function of the periodical to express. It must define and make explicit the principles and standards more or less consciously acknowledged by its public, and reciprocally it must apply them consistently in making its judgments. The true application of critical standards is of course no mere mechanical use of a foot-rule, but rather the process of establishing, through discussion, the relation of a new work to the living tradition.[14] There will no doubt be a constant risk of lapsing into dogmatism in the formulation of standards. It is a risk that must be taken, though the intelligent critic will minimize it by preserving a disinterested sensitiveness in his response to new work. As a writer in *The Calendar* put it, 'the characteristics of a healthy criticism are invariably "classic", tending towards an ever greater rigidity of principle,

[13]The gatherings of people in Athens for conversation, the courts of Renaissance Italy, the French salons, and the lively intercourse of *honnêtes gens*, the kind of life which existed in Lord Falkland's country house, are different forms of the one ideal, an effort to realize an intense but widely interested intellectual life. When there are enough of such people to make the coterie spirit impossible, literature has at once its purpose, its tribunal and its most profound stimulus'.—Note on *Literature and the 'Honnête Homme'*: *The Criterion*, I, 422.

[14]'The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted: and this is conformity between the old and the new'. —*Tradition and the Individual Talent*, T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 15.

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organizations more explicit, and the canalization of the wide, shallow stream of taste'. Ideally, then, the literary review helps both to build up and to preserve a critical tradition. At the same time it has an educational function, that of extending the public capable of recognizing its standards and of converting general good-will into conscious understanding of the questions at issue.

It must be able to command the services of responsible and authoritative critics, and clearly these will need to be sufficiently well-paid for commercial or other considerations not to hamper them in the performance of their task. Independence is an obvious necessity both in the review as a whole and in the individual writers. This suggests another main function of the literary periodical, that of giving employment to the unknown aspirant to letters, providing him with a regular career or at least a temporary market until he has made his name.

It will help the young writer further by supplying at once a stimulus and a check, providing on the one hand the encouragement of a centre of literary interests and ideas, on the other a critical resistance, something to push against, so that even if he openly revolts against contemporary critical authority because it has become too rigidly 'classic' he will be driven to define his position more consciously and with greater care.

In any large and complex society there must inevitably be a variety of different periodicals approaching from different angles and stressing different interests and preoccupations. Given a normally healthy culture the exchange of ideas between these different groups would contribute to a general centre of consensus in a similar manner to the play of individual opinion within the groups. This, needless to say, is a very different thing from the mere existence side by side of a number of different coteries, each self-contained and exclusive.

Can we say that the critical periodical in the past has ever approximated to this ideal, or approached it more closely than at present? What justification is there for regarding the nineteenth century as in some sense a Golden Age of reviewing? Are the harassed modern editors who cast envious eyes upon the power and authority of the great Regency quarterlies deluding themselves by forgetting the frequent abuse of that power? What part, in fact, did the critical periodical play in the century following the foundation of the *Edinburgh*? Historical inquiry can supply pretty decisive answers to these questions.

R. G. Cox.

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THE NOVEL AS DRAMATIC POEM (II):

'WUTHERING HEIGHTS'

'The gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely "I love" or "I hate" but "we, the whole human race" and "you, the eternal powers . . . " the sentence remains unfinished'. (Virginia Woolf).

I.

IF *Wuthering Heights* does not represent the coherence of a *Macbeth*, it is important to remember that the novel is the first in English which invites the same kind of attention that we give to *Macbeth* It has a similar complexity, makes the same claim as poetry. Not only because the novelist's method is dramatic; but because the status of the language, the seriousness of the purposes for which it is used are those of poetry. As an Elizabethan play stands or falls by the quality of the poetry at its crises of meaning, so *Wuthering Heights* may be said to justify itself by the quality of some half-dozen or so speeches of Catherine's and Heathcliff's which are as direct and as highly organized in word and rhythm as poetry. In such speeches the novel establishes the reality of its subject matter. And the subject matter of *Wuthering Heights* is a way of feeling about man's place in the universe. This is also the subject matter of *Cold in the earth.*

One can read *Wuthering Heights*, as one reads *Cold in the earth*, without questioning the seriousness of situations so poignantly and strongly presented. The quality of achievement from chapter to chapter is so consistent that it establishes as much unity and interconnection as the common reader requires. We are reminded repeatedly of that fine control of feeling which distinguishes Emily Brontë's best known poem.

' "Come in! Come in!" he sobbed. "Cathy, do come. Oh do—*once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last!" '

Her italics, far from being obtrusive, are usually as much in place as the stress in a line of poetry, and suggest a vivid exactness in what she wishes to do. There are not many things in the book which one reads with reservations and those are a few passages in which the intensity and repetition are felt to be static, adjectival and insistent rather than an enrichment, felt to be rather mechanical.

' "You talk of her mind being unsettled. How the devil could it be otherwise in her frightful isolation? And that insipid,

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paltry creature attending her from duty and humanity! From pity and charity! He might as well plant an oak in a flower-pot and expect it to thrive, as imagine he can restore her to vigour in the soil of his shallow cares'' '.

There is more mere raillery in this than was probably intended: the analogy is literary and too deliberate. So too, the whole speech in Chapter XV which contains the following syllogism: 'I have not broken your heart: you have broken it, and in breaking it you have broken mine'. And in one of the key passages in the novel, Catherine's 'I *am* Heathcliff!' is an assertion that needs the rest of the book to justify it or at least to make it acceptable. For, again, that speech has more resonance, more overtone, than (one must surmise) was intended.[1] It balances between the passionate assertion of love, and an attempt to state the meaning of living. Catherine's attitude to Heathcliff is, indeed, the main subject of the book, and it is an exceedingly complex knot of feelings, of attachments, of loyalties, of intensities—and Heathcliff is plainly not an adequate object for them all. After Catherine's death, Heathcliff has to be made to explain and to represent his own significance, and his declarations of feeling towards the vanished Catherine are usually closer to those of a mere lover. The feelings of Catherine towards Heathcliff are different from his towards her; and her feelings are more than feelings towards him. They are feelings towards life and death, Wuthering Heights, the universe. On her deathbed she cries:

' ''That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet: and take him with me: he's in my soul. And'' she added musingly, ''the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it and in it'' '.

Recent accounts of the novel have tended to smooth over many of the difficulties, to make it more of a work of art than it is, to make more completely separate than they were, the woman who suffered and the woman who created. She appears to have striven

[1] *Cp.* her interesting poem (No. 738 in the *Oxford Book*) in which the echo 'cease to be' occurs:

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes cease to be,
And thou wert left alone
Every existence would exist in thee.

The poem has a similar resonance, points too insistently. Notice too Catherine's 'should be' in 'I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is or should be an existence of yours beyond you'.

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to make as clear an object as she could, and there are few more impersonal novels in English. Yet the 'I' is present: not in omniscient comment, but in a phrase, a rhythm, that is 'deeper' than 'work of art' suggests. There is a serious idiosyncrasy in the point of view as in the word 'solid' in the line 'Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt'. It represents another level of sincerity than that of the staple prose.

This is partly the explanation of much dislike of the novel. Another cause of misunderstanding is the absence of anything one could confidently name a moral. The 'structure' of the novel is firmly there as one reads. But it is not a moral tale. The author's preferences are not shown[2], do not reveal themselves unambiguously even to analysis. Not a comment refers back to the author. In the world of *Wuthering Heights* good and bad are not applicable terms. The author appears to say—'That is one kind of person. They live long, more contentedly, accepting and giving affection freely. But these others are also possible and necessary, to whom common standards hardly apply. To these life is not a submission to time, a round of gentleness and enjoyment and love. They were born to live more keenly, to suffer the claims of feelings more keenly, and to die young. They were neither wise nor good but selfish, wilful and violent. They were not content'.

The end of the novel is a comparative calm: but it is not the calm of

> So, thanks to all at once, and to each one
> Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.

Fine as the last brief paragraph in the novel is, it does not come from the omniscient author nor yet from Nelly Dean, but from the foreigner Lockwood, in whose lips it has a certain ambiguity, placed as it is after the little shepherd boy's vision of 'Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t'Nab'. So that one reads the last sentence uncertain which word, if any, to stress.

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[2]Even Linton Heathcliff is not a complete wretch. The following, for example, connects him with an idea of Moira not irrelevant to the main themes of the novel. He is a born victim. 'You are so much happier than I am, you ought to be better. Papa talks enough of my defects, and shows enough scorn of me, to make it natural I should doubt myself. I doubt whether I am not altogether as worthless as he calls me, frequently; and then I feel so cross and bitter, I hate everybody! I *am* worthless, and bad in temper, and bad in spirit, almost always; and, if you choose, you *may* say good-bye: you'll get rid of an annoyance. Only, Catherine, do me this justice: believe that if I might be as sweet, and as kind, and as good as you are, I would be; . . . and believe that your kindness has made me love you deeper than if I deserved your love: and though I couldn't, and cannot help showing my nature to you, I regret it and repent it; and shall regret and repent it till I die!' 'I felt he spoke the truth'.

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> ' "I lingered round them under that benign sky: watched the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth'.

Each of the words 'anyone' 'could' 'ever' 'imagine' and 'unquiet' appears to invite an intonation which would modify the meaning. Irony is not excluded. It is probably an evasion to read the sentence in a monotone. It is more of a question than an assertion.[3]

The tranquillity of the ending of *Wuthering Heights* is indeed an ambiguous tranquillity. For young Cathy and Hareton are different people; one might say lesser people, than Catherine and Heathcliff. They represent the reinstatement of the Earnshaws. But the deaths of Catherine and Heathcliff, of Edgar and Hindley, Frances and Isabella and Linton, are not 'justified' by the union of Cathy and Hareton. The ownership of the Heights is not a main issue. The main interest is in the quality of life lived by the chief actors, the quality of suffering they inflict on one another, and of their attitudes to life and death. No amount of interpretation of the Cathy-Hareton courtship will yield a moral order by which to judge all that has taken place. There is no lysis, only a lull. Nelly Dean will go on sitting 'with a fist on either knee', seeing yet not seeing. Joseph 'hale and sinewy' will go on labouring and praying, as indestructible and as unhelpful as a twisted thorn. Lockwood will return to 'devastate the moors', always escaping lightly, frequently 'over head and ears' to his 'fascinating creatures' and 'goddesses', yet remaining unattached. And Cathy and Hareton, though of Earnshaw stock and heirs to that blood, are young. The conclusion of the novel is diagrammatic. There is no solution, no assurance that, should another stranger intrude, it would not all happen again. The love of Cathy and Hareton does not 'place' the feeling between Hindley and Frances, between Catherine and Edgar, Catherine and Heathcliff, Hindley and Edgar and Heathcliff; is no comment on it. The most one can say is that the ending does not conflict with the main themes, that the book can be read and re-read in its entirety although the main themes do seem to aim at a more serious and ambitious statement. All the themes are given continuity by Mrs. Dean's natural affection, the consistency of the moors themselves and the weathered obstinate permanence of Joseph.

The main problems in any account of the novel are these: to decide on the status of Catherine and her relationship with Edgar

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[3] *Cp.* chapter XVI. Nelly, after recounting Catherine's death, says 'Do you believe such people *are* happy in the other world, sir? I'd give a great deal to know'. Lockwood evades her with 'I declined to answer Mrs. Dean's question, which struck me as something heterodox'.

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and Heathcliff: to decide on the status of Heathcliff and his relationship with Catherine, Hindley and the Lintons: to decide on the status of the Cathy-Hareton relationship and the appropriateness of reading it as a comment on what has happened earlier.

II.

It is perhaps not being too trite to say that Emily Brontë differs from Jane Austen in that she attempts to establish her own view of the world rather than to describe the behaviour of people within a given pattern. In this she is potentially more important, has the importance of Lawrence. Her novel is set deliberately outside society, in relation to the 'universe' as represented by the spaces of Wuthering Heights. Yet it depends for its effect on the narration of the story by two representatives of different grades of normality—Lockwood (the town) and Nelly Dean (the sensible, motherly countrywoman). These two live entirely within their worlds, their commentaries represent different levels of understanding or misunderstanding of the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship. They are a means of defining it, so that we see it through vistas of narrative and reported dialogue. The author begins at the end, and in a series of swift episodes (which include Lockwood's dreams) tangles us at once in the feelings of the novel.

Though Catherine employs the word 'love' to describe her affection both for Edgar and Heathcliff, the words 'loyalty', 'fidelity', 'constancy' seem more applicable to her feelings for the latter. Heathcliff, the waif, whose only claim on life is his hold on it, his fierce resistance to extinction, is introduced into an ancient family of which the male heir (Hindley) is rather spoilt and aimless, and the daughter is a spirited creature who recognizes a necessary selfish vitality in the gipsy. The daughter is the real heir to the family blood which had survived centuries of life on Wuthering Heights. She grows up in a close childish intimacy with the gipsy, which was at times almost a defensive confederacy against the harshness of Hindley and old Joseph. They often hid 'snug in the arch of the dresser'. They were the 'unfriended creatures', frequently thrashed by Joseph. Catherine marries Edgar Linton, preferring love, attentiveness and comfort to any possible relationship with Heathcliff. She is genuinely in love with Edgar. 'I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says. I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely and altogether'. She speaks gaily, rather prettily of it. Life with Edgar would be delightful, graceful, amusing. Yet paradoxically she answers Nelly's question 'Have you considered how you'll bear the separation (from Heathcliff) and how he'll bear to be quite deserted in the world?' with indignant seriousness.

> ' "He quite deserted! we separated! Who is to separate us pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo! Not as long as I live Ellen: for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the

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earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff. Oh, that's not what I intend—that's not what I mean! I shouldn't be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! He'll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime'' '.

Her feelings towards Heathcliff are not 'love'. Though later in the novel Heathcliff accuses her of betrayal of her deeper instincts there is no suggestion in the novel that her choice is condemned. It is not suggested that a marriage with Heathcliff would have been possible in any sense. Catherine's feelings for Heathcliff represent a recognition of something valuable in him, a quality of experience, of suffering, which exacts from both a loyalty, a stubborn violent sincerity. The loyalty is to a vision of life, that vision of life which made for survival on the indifferent moors, the moors being the essential scene. It is this loyalty which makes their behaviour, as Lawrence says, 'bare and stark, lacking any of the graces of sentiment'. The violence of their behaviour when they are reunited is an assertion of the importance of other ties, unthwarted by social compromises. Edgar shows himself quite unable to understand the nature of their relationship. Heathcliff says: 'You must forgive me for I struggled only for you'. And Edgar: 'Catherine, unless we are to have cold tea . . . ' Edgar's reception of Heathcliff is perfectly civil and friendly. But addressed to Heathcliff, such phrases as 'recalling old times' and 'a cordial reception' are felt to be ironically inappropriate. 'Heathcliff dropped his slight hand'. Edgar does his best but fails to understand. That night he 'began to cry'. Yet we are never invited to approve of or sympathize completely with Catherine. The oddity of her behaviour is clearly stated by Nelly and so is Edgar's rather conventional point of view. The conflict which Catherine endures is not a conflict of 'loves'.

' ''No! I tell you, I have such faith in Linton's love, that I believe I might kill him, and he wouldn't wish to retaliate'.

I advised her to value him the more for his affection.

''I do'' she answered. ''But he needn't resort to whining for trifles'' '.

Catherine's married life with Edgar had been happy. 'I believe I may assert that they were really in possession of deep and growing happiness'. But—'the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand'.

' ''It ended. Well, we *must* be for ourselves in the long run: the mild and generous are only more justly selfish than the domineering; and it ended when circumstances caused each to feel that the one's interest was not the chief consideration in the other's thoughts'' '.

The return of Heathcliff is clearly a test for Linton. Heathcliff is reintroduced in a symbolic scene. He is an intruder in the quiet garden, amid the apples and the soft sweet air, against the reflection of a score of glittering moons in the Grange windows. The test is of the compatibility of the Linton view of life and the

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vision evoked by the return of Heathcliff. Edgar accuses her of 'welcoming a runaway servant as a brother'. Indeed that is more the quality of their relationship—one of kin rather than of lovers. Heathcliff is a brother in suffering, in quality of experience. Her love for him is a love of his spirit, his tenacity, his struggles, his refusal to be obliterated. Her loyalty is to her sense of connectedness with him. 'I *am* Heathcliff!' For both of them life had a certain quality which the sociable world ignored or slighted or concealed behind bodyguards and retainers. 'A source of little visible delight but necessary'. Heathcliff's return was for Catherine a claim on her attention and loyalty, a reminder to her of essentials. The social pattern wasn't everything. There was something 'else'. The Grange was pleasant. But one should remember 'the Heights'. Heathcliff, who had shared childhood experiences with her, who had become a part of her knowledge of what life was like and was fated to be an outsider, touched that other level of feeling in her and in some way represented it.

Edgar chose to be jealous.

One episode in the struggle, the encounter between Heathcliff and Edgar in Chapter XI is especially painful. It is typical too of the whole effect of the novel in that, splendidly convincing, it yet does not give the impression of a nicely balanced reversal of the situation. There are several other scenes in the novel which might be described as 'painful' (*e.g.* the exchange of horses between Hindley and Heathcliff, the brutal exclusion of young Heathcliff from the tea party, the baiting of Isabella by Catherine); scenes in which deliberate violence is done to our ideas of elementary kindness and fairness, in which brute force asserts itself in the place of love and kindness. In Chapter XI the tables are turned on Edgar and he is locked in with Heathcliff and Catherine beyond the help of his men.

> ' "Fair means!" she said, in answer to her husband's look of angry surprise. "If you have not courage to attack him, make an apology, or allow yourself to be beaten. It will correct you of feigning more valour than you possess . . . and I wish Heathcliff may flog you sick for daring to think an evil thought of me!" '

One's comment here is that, much as Edgar's behaviour required a check, most of Catherine's taunts are beside the point. Edgar's object in obtaining the help of two servants to expel Heathcliff from the house was not to demonstrate his own valour but to make that expulsion more certain. And Catherine, by locking the door against assistance, had made a forcible re-adjustment that was no more 'fair' than her taunts. Heathcliff could only too easily have flogged Edgar sick. The effect of the scene is not to establish 'fair means' but to assert the importance of single strength, even violence, in conditions which deprive people of artificial helps. The encounter in the kitchen is an analogy of the greater theme. Love and kindness are not enough. As now

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in this struggle, so it was, always would be, in the eternal conditions of Wuthering Heights. 'I'd rather see Edgar at bay than you' she tells Heathcliff.

Yet Edgar does not lose face in the scene. He strikes 'a blow that would have levelled a slighter man'—a gesture of similar value to Heathcliff's flinging apple sauce into Edgar's face. Edgar is sympathetically presented to the end and his grief at Catherine's death contrasts with the violence of Heathcliff's reaction, his progress in avarice and vindictiveness. 'He was too good to be thoroughly unhappy long. *He* didn't pray for Catherine's soul to haunt him. Time brought resignation and a melancholy sweeter than common joy'.

The differences between Catherine's feelings towards Heathcliff and his towards her are as much the 'cause' of her death as Edgar's behaviour. Catherine is at the centre of intolerable misunderstanding. She tells Heathcliff: 'I begin to be secure and tranquil; and you, restless to know us at peace, appear resolved on exciting a quarrel. Quarrel with Edgar if you please, Heathcliff, and deceive his sister: you'll hit on exactly the most efficient method of revenging yourself on me'. Then—'What new phase of his character is this? . . . I've treated you infernally—and you'll take revenge! How will you take it, ungrateful brute? How have I treated you infernally?' Nelly comments 'The spirit which served her was growing intractable'.

Catherine is driven to distraction by the pressure of misunderstanding even from those who love her. She accuses Nelly of 'apathy', and Nelly continues: 'The stolidity with which I received these instructions was, no doubt rather exasperating . . . but I believed that a person who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account, beforehand, might by exerting her will manage to control herself tolerably, even while under their influence'.

Here Nelly 'places' Catherine, as Catherine's accusations of 'apathy' had 'placed' Nelly. Which 'placing' is the more important? We know that Nelly is conventional and that her moralising is rarely quite to the point; also that the degree of conventionality of Nelly's opinions varies, and that it is often difficult to decide when she is the butt of irony and when not. Our sympathy does go to Catherine, but only because her earlier attempts to state her feelings have been sufficiently serious and convincing, convincing at the level at which they claim to be convincing. As convincing as poetry. When Edgar, with Nelly's approval, appears before Cathy to act his expected part, our sympathy for Catherine deepens, for she is being driven into a confusion of less serious, irrelevant feelings. Edgar insists:

> ' "Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter, or will you give me up? It is impossible for you to be *my* friend and *his* at the same time: and I absolutely *require* to know which you choose . . ."
>
> "She rang the bell till it broke with a twang: I entered

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leisurely. It was enough to try the temper of a saint, such senseless, wicked rages! There she lay dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters'' '

The breaking bell breaks Catherine. In this paragraph and in those immediately following, the Nelly Dean standard receives its fiercest buffeting. 'I went about my household duties, convinced that the Grange had but one sensible soul in its walls, and that lodged in my body'. The Lintons have the dignity of people who suffer strong feelings, but Nelly represents merely the common sense which can afford to be perpetually kind. She is a witness. The account of Catherine's derangement is quite real and justifies its complexity; and being enacted in the presence of Nelly Dean's normality it establishes the loneliness of Catherine's situation, and its inevitableness—'her frightful isolation'.

III.

The whole of the long struggle between Hindley and Heathcliff has the same painful quality as the encounter between the latter and Edgar, and it is usually passed over though it occupies an important place in the novel. Is there a 'meaning' to the struggle between these two—Hindley, a pure Earnshaw and the interloper Heathcliff? Hindley is not by any means contemptible. He too, having lost love, decides to die: and his ferocious despair is impressive. 'His sorrow was of that kind that will not lament. He neither wept nor prayed; he cursed and defied: execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation'. This is another attitude shared by all the chief characters. They take the measure of life and decide to die. Each of these wilful deaths—Hindley's and Edgar's included—is an assertion of the reality of feelings, of the importance of never forgetting, of final seriousness; that life is not worth having at any price. Nelly taunts Hindley, as Cathy later taunts Heathcliff, with 'They all hate you—that's the truth'. And Heathcliff admits that 'It's a pity he cannot kill himself with drink. He's doing his utmost, but his constitution defies him'.

We cannot ignore too, Nelly's alarmingly non-committal moralizing in Chapter XVII.

' ''I used to draw a comparison between him (Edgar) and Hindley Earnshaw, and perplex myself to explain satisfactorily why their conduct was so opposite in similar circumstances. They had both been fond husbands, and were both attached to their children; and I couldn't see how they shouldn't both have taken the same road, for good or evil. But, I thought in my mind, Hindley, with apparently the stronger head, has shown himself sadly the worse and the weaker man. When his ship struck, the captain abandoned his post; and the crew, instead of trying to save her, rushed into riot and confusion, leaving no hope for their luckless vessel. Linton, on the contrary, displayed the true

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courage of a loyal and faithful soul; he trusted God; and God comforted him. One hoped, and the other despaired: they chose their own lots, and were righteously doomed to endure them. But you'll not want to hear my moralizing, Mr. Lockwood; you'll judge as well as I can, all these things: at least, you'll think you will, and that's the same'' '.

The effect of this passage is to give the reader a deliberate jolt, to compel him to reconsider whether he has understood Hindley at all or Edgar, and by what standards he dismisses them. 'He's barely twenty-seven, it seems', Dr. Kenneth tells Nelly, 'that's your own age: who would have thought you were born in one year?'

Heathcliff's hate for the Lintons is a main theme and is made credible: but his triumph over (his murder of?) Hindley, cannot be satisfactorily allegorized. It is protracted and painful and vivid, and its purpose seems to be to 'convey', to demonstrate still further the vindictiveness of Heathcliff. Nelly Dean, the agent of common morality, could not prevent herself 'from pondering on the question —Had he (Hindley) had fair play?' In relation to Heathcliff 'fair means' and 'fair play' are equally irrelevant terms. If the weakness of an account of Heathcliff is to throw him out of human analogy, it is not entirely the fault of the critic. For, outside the passionate affirmations of Catherine and his childhood with her, Heathcliff himself has more in common with a conception like Volpone than with human nature. He becomes, after Catherine's death, the embodiment of ruthlessness. He becomes two-dimensional in that he is made, unlike any of the other main characters, entirely consistent and because he is actuated only by hate. He is the agent of 'moral teething'. 'I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething: and I grind with greater energy in proportion to the increase of pain. It's odd what a savage feeling I have to anything that seems afraid of me'.

It is possible to consider the treatment of Isabella's infatuation with Heathcliff as a criticism of romantic love, but one hesitates to ascribe anything so tendentious (perhaps extraneous) to Emily Brontë. She seems to use this stage in the story first to throw into sharper relief on the female side those differences established between Edgar and Heathcliff, that is, to give substance to Heathcliff's scornful comparison (of Catherine with the Lintons)—'She is so immeasurably superior to them'. Secondly, and this is her main purpose, to bring out the peculiar atrociousness of Heathcliff's hate. The more atrocious the hate, the more atrocious, we are to feel, is Heathcliff's suffering. It is not easy to see Isabella as the object of irony. She is 'infantile' 'the infatuated girl' 'the poor thing'. Emily Brontë's irony (directed mainly against Lockwood, Joseph and Nelly) is more subtle. Isabella represents not romantic love but another kind of incomprehension of the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship, another thread in that tangle of self-righteous mis-

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understanding which creates in the novel a pressure of thwarted feelings. Catherine feels no rivalry—her warning to Isabella is sincere. So absurd does Isabella's insinuation of rivalry appear to Catherine that she becomes 'on mature consideration, really offended with her companion'. Isabella's insinuations are the counterpart of Edgar's irrelevant jealousy. The manner of Nelly's discovery of the girl's abduction has the effect of underlining unmistakably the author's interest in her. 'My surprise and perplexity were great on discovering, by touch more than vision, Isabella's springer, Fanny, suspended by a handkerchief, and nearly at its last gasp'. To this Heathcliff reverts later—'The first thing she saw me do, on coming out of the Grange, was to hang up her little dog'. Heathcliff's cynical cruelty to the dog is an extension of his treatment of Isabella.

After her marriage the girl is shown to possess humour and toughness, an unexpected loyalty to Edgar and unexpected courage in defending him. 'Whatever he (Heathcliff) may pretend, he wishes to provoke Edgar to desperation: he says he has married me on purpose to obtain power over him; and he shan't obtain it. I'll die first! I just hope, I pray, that he may forget his diabolical prudence and kill me! The single pleasure I can imagine is to die or to see him dead!' 'I'd rather he suffered *less* if I might cause his sufferings and he might *know* that I was the cause'. As a contrast to the stubborn loyalty of Isabella, kind-hearted Nelly becomes a silly agent of Heathcliff's malevolence. 'Well, Mr. Lockwood, I argued and complained and flatly refused him fifty times: but in the long run he forced me to an agreement. I engaged to carry a letter from him to my mistress: and should she consent, I promised to let him have intelligence of Linton's next absence from home . . . Was it right or wrong? . . . I tried to smooth away all disquietude on the subject by affirming, with frequent iteration, that the betrayal of trust, if it merited so harsh an appellation, should be the last'. Of course it is not the last, and it does merit the harsh appellation. Nelly's open-mindedness on such subjects is one way in which her choric, unheroic status is made clear. She and Lockwood are outside the tragic hierarchy. 'I seated myself in a chair, and rocked to and fro, passing harsh judgment on my many derelictions of duty; from which, it struck me then, all the misfortunes of my employers sprang'.

Heathcliff, after Catherine's death, becomes manifestly something less than her feelings towards him. Only towards the end does he make an effort to put himself in touch with people, become, for a time, more human. He turns—as others had done throughout the novel—to the affection and kindness of Nelly. He explains himself to her.

> ' "I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished! My old enemies have not beaten

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me; now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives: I could do it: and none could hinder me. But where is the use? I don't care for striking: I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time only to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case: I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing'' '.

Though Heathcliff does not turn to love, he does suspend his hatred. But it is now for him, as it was from the first for Catherine, not a human relationship, even one of hate, that must be sought.

' ''I dreamt I was sleeping the last sleep by that sleeper, with my heart stopped and my cheek frozen against hers'' '.

The force of the words 'stopped' and 'frozen' assert the intensity of a wish; like the force of the word 'puzzles' in 'puzzles the will'; or the appalling force of the words 'cold' and 'piled' in 'Cold in the earth and the deep snow piled above thee'—which appear to engage unexpectedly the whole weight of the writer's most secret feelings.

There is a change in Heathcliff; but the explicitness of his repudiation of 'labouring the whole time only to exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity' should be a caution against any attempt to interpret the novel in the light of this change.

' ''Nelly, there is a strange change approaching: I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to eat and drink. Those two who have left the room are the only objects which retain a distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain, amounting to agony. About *her* I won't speak; and I don't desire to think; but I earnestly wish she were invisible: her presence invokes only maddening sensations. *He* moves me differently: and yet if I could do it without seeming insane, I'd never see him again! You'll perhaps think me rather inclined to become so'', he added, making an effort to smile, ''if I try to describe the thousand forms of past associations and ideas he awakens or embodies. But you'll not talk of what I tell you; and my mind is so eternally secluded in itself, it is tempting at last to turn it out to another.

''Five minutes ago, Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being; I felt to him in such a variety of ways, that it would have been impossible to have accosted him rationally. In the first place, his startling likeness to Catherine connected him fearfully with her. That, however, which you may suppose the most potent to arrest my imagination, is actually the least: for what is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her

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features are shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day—I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women—my own features—mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! Well, Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love; of my wild endeavours to hold my right; my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish . . . "

"But what do you mean by a *change*, Mr. Heathcliff? . . . Then you are not afraid of death?"

"Afraid? No!" he replied. "I have neither a fear nor a presentiment, nor a hope of death. Why should I? With my hard constitution and temperate mode of living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to, and probably *shall*, remain above ground till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe—almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring: it is by compulsion that I do the slightest act not prompted by one thought; and by compulsion that I notice anything alive or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea. I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it *will* be reached—and *soon*—because it has devoured my existence: I am swallowed up in the anticipation of its fulfilment. My confessions have not relieved me; but they may account for some otherwise unaccountable phases of humour which I show. O God! It is a long fight, I wish it were over!" '

Those rhythms (they represent the strand of reality in the novelist's subject matter) are as fine an achievement, as much of a poem as *Cold in the earth*. The most serious prose in *Wuthering Heights* is written out of the same organization of feelings which produced the poem. Emily Brontë is the first writer to have used the novel as a vehicle for that kind of statement which is contained in the finest of English dramatic poetry.

Heathcliff's life, and the dead Catherine's, is a long loyalty to that connectedness of which Hareton is, we feel, a not very important fragment. Heathcliff is connected—'in a variety of ways'—by a knot of feelings: and Hareton is abandoned, is made candidly insignificant, in the next sentence. 'That, however, which you may suppose the most potent to arrest my imagination, is actually the least: for what is not connected with her to me?' The prose moves on to that confessional soliloquy which is what Heathcliff and Catherine 'mean'—'the ghost of my immortal love; of my wild endeavours to hold my right; my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish'. Heathcliff and Catherine share 'but one single wish', are 'associated with one universal idea'. The rhythms bend back the stiff spring.

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IV.

The alteration in Heathcliff is brought about, it is implied, by Cathy and Hareton.

> 'They lifted their eyes together to encounter Mr. Heathcliff; perhaps you have never remarked that their eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw'.

The Earnshaws have, from one point of view, *ousted* Heathcliff. He has been throughout of *involuntary* service to them, and has somehow, despite himself, won the respect of both Cathy and Hareton. Earlier in the novel, the catching of the infant Hareton by Heathcliff—the physical ease of it—had seemed symbolic. 'Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; by a natural impulse he arrested his descent, and setting him on his feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident'.

Involuntarily Heathcliff has given something to Hareton and also to Cathy, has made them more valuable, more durable. But, as if to emphasize differences, the absence of compromise, they 'shift to the Grange'. Only old Joseph will live in the kitchen at Wuthering Heights. 'The rest will be shut up'.

Little of the more serious prose of the novel is devoted to Cathy or to Hareton. And fairly coherent as even the account suggested here could be, in a general sort of way, it is not enough to contain the whole power of the novel. Any account which represents the novel as a complete condemnation of the Linton world seems to be unsatisfactory; to any such account the appropriate answer would be to quote, say, this:

> ' "I shouldn't have discovered that he had been there, except for the disarrangement of the drapery about the corpse's face and for observing on the floor a curl of light hair, fastened with a silver thread; which, on examination, I ascertained to have been taken from a locket hung round Catherine's neck. Heathcliff had opened the trinket and cast out its contents, replacing them by a black lock of his own. I twisted the two, and enclosed them together" '.

At one or two points, the novelist appears to have attempted to express the value of Hareton. Heathcliff says:

> ' "He has satisfied my expectations. If he were a born fool I should not enjoy it half so much. But he's no fool: and I can sympathize with all his feelings, having felt them myself. I know what he suffers now, for instance, exactly: it is merely a beginning of what he shall suffer though. And he'll never be able to emerge from his bathos of coarseness and ignorance. I've got him faster than his scoundrel of a father secured me, and lower; for he takes a pride in his brutishness. I've taught him to scorn everything extra-animal as silly and weak. Don't you think Hindley would be proud of his son, if he could see

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him? Almost as proud as I am of mine. But there's this difference; one is gold put to the use of paving-stones, and the other is tin polished to ape a service of silver. *Mine* has nothing valuable about it; yet I shall have the merit of making it go as far as such poor stuff can go. *His* had first-rate qualities, and they are lost: rendered worse than unavailing. *I* have nothing to regret; *he* would have more than any but me are aware of. And the best of it is, Hareton is damnably fond of me! You'll own that I've outmatched Hindley there. If the dead villain could rise from his grave to abuse me for his off-spring's wrongs, I should have the fun of seeing the said off-spring fright him back again, indignant that he should dare to rail at the one friend he has in the world'' '.

If the meaning of Hareton had been very important to the novelist, this speech, one feels, should have been an important speech. But it is not. As an attempt to generalize the meaning of Hareton it is not very impressive. The differences between Hareton and Linton are too great to mean much. The rhythm and argument are not serious. The gold and tin imagery is not (by the novel's own standards) very interesting, represents no organization. For once the italics are mere thumps.

And, in Chapter XXXIII, Nelly too describes the nature of Hareton's relationship to Heathcliff:

' ''I heard Hareton sternly check his cousin on her offering a revelation of her father-in-law's conduct to his father. He said he wouldn't suffer a word to be uttered in his disparagement: if he were the devil, it didn't signify; he would stand by him; and he'd rather she would abuse himself, as she used to, than begin on Mr. Heathcliff. Catherine was waxing cross at this; but he found means to make her hold her tongue, by asking how she would like *him* to speak ill of her father? Then she comprehended that Earnshaw took the master's reputation home to himself; and was attached by ties stronger than reason could break—chains, forged by habit, which it would be cruel to attempt to loosen'' '.

Something should have come out in that last sentence and doesn't; something that is blurred by 'chains forged by habit' and 'it would be cruel'. The blurs mark interstices.

The conclusion of the story is pastoral in its quality, with the girl sticking primroses into Hareton's porridge, and Mrs. Dean still there, and the pharisaical Joseph, endeared to us despite himself by his wonderful mouthing language. Joseph is part of the heath, he has the gnarled tenacity of a rooted thing, represents the continuity of the Earnshaws. He too, at his level, is an agent of relentless 'moral teething', the thrasher, the righteous servant of lawful masters. Like nature, he is indifferent. His language, its tortuous articulateness, gives detail to our knowledge of Wuthering Heights. His fanatical speech adds value to the place, and the

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extraordinary exactness and variety with which his vernacular is given is typical of the consistent yet varied particularity of that world. Everything is presented, dramatized, reported. The author has withdrawn herself so completely, has been so consistently impersonal, that we are left to infer, from careful weighing of language values, where her main interests lie. There is some agreement that the main stress is on the Catherine-Heathcliff-Edgar themes, not on the survival of the Earnshaws in Cathy and Hareton. The story ends with the softening to love by Hareton and the suspension of hate in Heathcliff. But the latter is not moved by Cathy's 'I don't hate you'.

> ' "Keep your eft's fingers off; and move, or I'll kick you!" cried Heathcliff, brutally repulsing her. "I'd rather be hugged by a snake. How the devil can you dream of fawning on me? I *detest* you!" '

There are no graces of sentiment, no concessions to love. We are left to surmize whether Heathcliff paused in hate because he felt its futility or had lost interest, or because he respected Catherine in Cathy and the reminder of his own youth in Hareton.

The reticence of the novelist in the last pages of her work, her reluctance to underline, to perorate, should make its interpretation exceptionally tentative. And we are not helped, as in reading an Elizabethan play, by a recognition of the interaction of the poetry and Elizabethan ethics, by a sense of 'relevant intensity'. The value of such words as 'You sure and firmset earth' or 'Good morning to the day! And next—my gold' is rich yet definite because they combine with other coherent ideas and feelings in Elizabethan language and in the plays themselves. But there are places in *Wuthering Heights*, especially in the account of the Hindley-Heathcliff struggle, where the force and precision are great, yet the amount of meaning is disproportionately slight.

> 'The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back, closed into its owner's wrist. Heathcliff pulled it away by main force, slitting up the flesh as it passed on and thrust it dripping into his pocket. He then took a stone, struck down the division between two windows, and sprang in. His adversary had fallen senseless with excessive pain and the flow of blood that gushed from an artery or a large vein. The ruffian kicked and trampled on him and dashed his head repeatedly against the flags'.

Particularity, vividness and insistence in language are a sign that special meaning is being given. The force of 'gushed' 'slit up the flesh' 'dripping' 'dashed' is greater than the amount of meaning created by the situation. To consider the scene as merely another demonstration of Heathcliff's ruthlessness seems inadequate; yet that is probably all that the author intended. The excess of vividness must therefore be taken either as a symptom of immaturity,

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of insufficiently understood intensity; or as an error of judgment on the author's part, a failure to recognize that the physical violence and ruthlessness of Heathcliff had already been established without the insistence on the 'gushing' and 'slitting'.

Yet it is the particularity which makes the novel and carries us over those passages where we might be inclined to demur. The feelings of Catherine towards Edgar and Heathcliff are finally convincing and they are the most important theme in the book. It is after her death that Heathcliff tends to lose three-dimensional value, to become a type of ruthlessness and relentless hatred. His ferocity towards Hindley lacks the meaning of his antipathy to the Lintons: neither the value of his forbearance towards Cathy and Hareton, nor the significance of the survival of the lovers is made unambiguously clear. To have made these things clear would have meant sentimentalizing the whole book, and Heathcliff violently repulses the idea that he might be won by 'love'. 'How the devil can you dream of fawning on me!' The Heights are left empty. The view that the young lovers are a necessary compromise between the Linton and the Heathcliff levels is almost certainly a sentimental one. For if Emily Brontë has been careful about anything, she has been most careful not to qualify whatever the Catherine and Heathcliff themes may be taken to mean. For Catherine and Heathcliff are what she set out to say.

When it has acknowledged that *Wuthering Heights* does not possess the coherence of a *Macbeth*, criticism is freed to enjoy what is indestructible and rare and heroic in Emily Brontë's achievement. For she has been more ambitious than Shakespeare, has shown a 'gigantic ambition' of the order which the quotation from Virginia Woolf's essay splendidly suggests. Her world is emptier than Shakespeare's and her view less reassuring. 'Nobody knew what ailed her but me wrote Charlotte. 'I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home'. Her novel touches a level of experience which does not often come into the world of letters. It is a quality of suffering: it has anonymity. It is not complete. Perhaps some ballads represent it in English, but it seldom appears in the main stream, and few writers are in touch with it. It is a quality of experience the expression of which is at once an act of despair and an act of recognition or of worship It is the recognition of an absolute hierarchy. This is also the feeling in Aeschylus. It is found amongst genuine peasants and is a great strength. Developing in places which yield only the permanent essentials of existence, it is undistracted and universal. It is behind Tolstoy and Conrad, in whom it is 'transferred' to the sea. It is not strongly present in English life. It enriches the mind of Europe with a layer of unembittered asceticism.

Emily Brontë works in that level, in prose and in some poems. There she finds her recurrent theme. She was not a philosophic novelist. The value of her novel is in the vitality of the feelings,

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the steady unwillingness to make a pattern to simplify the experience of her young life.

* * * *

'The Elizabethan morality was an important convention . . . it hindered no feeling' (T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*). The status of a literary form, the seriousness of the purposes for which it is used, varies from age to age, and from country to country. The Elizabethan drama was remarkable in that, although it was 'public', it could be on occasion a vehicle for the most serious feelings of the greatest dramatists—could justify the use of poetry. *Wuthering Heights* is the first English novel to aim at a comparable seriousness.

The thorough dramatization of this novel is not necessarily to be taken as showing a dissatisfaction with the novel form. Emily Brontë could not have written as an omniscient author without being compelled to adopt an omniscient attitude, to distance by her tone and comment, to explain what she could not explain. She aimed at the maximum of statement with the minimum of explanation. It is her method which gives her language its consistent immediacy. The absence of *parti pris* (or decorum or agreement between writer and reader) in her language is another reason why her novel is disliked. She probably had no reading public in mind.

Perhaps *Wuthering Heights* does demonstrate how incapable the novel is of replacing the drama. The protagonist in a Greek play represents the maximum of communal affirmation and seriousness; and the play's tragic universality is greater than that of any Elizabethan tragedy because the point of departure and return (*i.e.*, the chorus) represents nothing as comforting as Elizabethan morality. The chorus in Greek tragedy represents merely a possible hypothesis. This too is the tone at the end of *Wuthering Heights*.

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MUSIC CHRONICLE

PROFESSOR WESTRUP once remarked that some of the most dangerous misconceptions about musical history arose from considering the characteristics of a school or period as though they were the characteristics of an individual composer. This is another way of making a point which I have often made in insisting on the need for some basic notion of the 'totality of the European tradition', if one is to have any real understanding of a particular branch of it. And in listening to music, over the last quarter, on radio and gramophone, it has been brought home to me that we are approaching a situation in which no cultivated person will have any further excuse for the grosser kind of historical distortion.

For it used to be said that it was no use talking about the totality of the European tradition, when most musically inclined people had no opportunity to hear any pre-eighteenth-century music. This case, though often an excuse for laziness, had an element of truth in it; but now the advent of the B.B.C.'s Third Programme has made it an illegitimate argument. Anyone can now have regular and continuous experience of pre-eighteenth-century music by the simple process of turning a knob. The music will not all be of equal interest, and the performances will vary both in virtuosity and scholarship; nonetheless this aspect of Third Programme music is a factor of immense cultural significance; to my mind it will, in the long run, exert a profound effect on the musical literacy of this country. It is not merely that the opportunities offered give listeners a saner, a more historical outlook on Europe's musical past, offering incidentally great richness of experience which was formally denied to all except a few specialists. More than this, increased familiarity with early music suggests new criteria and elicits different responses from those demanded by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music. And indirectly this makes the approach to contemporary music immeasurably simpler. Modern composers will themselves profit by this increased acquaintance with early music; still more, listeners will find that much in contemporary music which appeared to them anti-traditional merely belonged to a tradition different from that in which they were nurtured. In my view, the chance of obtaining a more coherent outlook on the European tradition which the Third Programme offers is at least as important, in the creation of a more rewarding relation between composer and public, as the more frequent performance of the works of the contemporary composer himself.

The Third Programme audience is a minority audience. Even a minority, however, which might be expected to take an interest in pre-eighteenth-century music, can hardly become very knowledgeable about that subject unless it is given opportunities to experience the music at first hand. Thus though it may be true to say that

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the Third Programme is preaching only to those willing to be converted, it is not true to say that it preaches merely to those converted already. Of course, no one would claim that the Third Programme, musically speaking, could not be improved upon. There is still a tendency for the programmes, especially those of mediaeval music, to be rather 'bitty'. I'd like to see regular *series* of recitals devoted to (for instance) Machaut, Dunstable, Dufay, Ockeghem, Obrecht, so that we could really begin to assimilate this music in our blood and bones. Some such habituation is essential; as it is, we are just beginning to acquire the savour when the music stops. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the B.B.C. has given us the chance to hear regular broadcasts of pre-eighteenth-century music, played—on the whole—with competence and scholarship, with musicianly understanding and with a mature sense of period. This has never been done before on such a scale, because no ordinary concert-giving institution could have the resources necessary for calling in the appropriate authority and group of performers for each recital. The B.B.C. has done it, and perhaps the measure of their success is that we have become blasé; we cheerfully miss works that in the old days we'd have considered ourselves lucky to have heard, even if it meant staying up till midnight. Even so, the rich experiences that come our way are plentiful enough. Offhand, I recall two most moving thirteenth-century motets, a lovely performance of a Ferrabosco fantasia for viols (played in tune!), part of an exquisite mass by Dufay, some subtly melancholy songs of Binchois, and some thrilling pieces for brass by composers who aren't even names to most of us (in Ernst Meyer's splendid series devoted to baroque music). The cultural implications of all this—apart from our immediate pleasure—can perhaps be suggested by saying that it seems to me that there are already signs that the fifteenth century is being reinstated, as was the sixteenth some decades ago. This desirable process might be assisted if some enterprising publisher were to produce an English translation of C. van den Borren's fine book on the period. (*Etudes sur le XVième Siècle Musical*).

On the contemporary side also, the Third Programme is fairly comprehensive. Here too I think a rather more systematic policy might not come amiss. We could do, for instance, with a series devoted to the 'classics' of contemporary music, many of which, although thirty or more years old, have never had an adequate hearing in this country. (The key works of Schoenberg are a case in point). Nonetheless, we've had copious draughts of modernity, from Willy Burkhard's noble symphony to a cantata of Webern; and performances of Bartók are becoming almost an everyday occurrence. Somebody is sure to say that there is too much—not too much Bartók especially, but too much Advanced Music of one kind or another; and that we'll all be suffering from musical indigestion. Here's where we must exercise discrimination, and self control; in these lean times we may perhaps permit ourselves a surfeit of spiritual nourishment. Some might say that we're not

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likely to grow excessively plump on a diet of Webern cantatas. In any case it seems to me clear that on the musical side the Third Programme can help to create a new informed audience and ultimately a richer musical culture. I refer specifically to the musical side, not the literary, which is a different story.

Possibly, if this new public expands, the time will come when the recording companies will fall into step and start issuing a series of adequately performed records of pre-eighteenth-century music to take the place, for English people, of the now unobtainable Anthologie Sonore series. For the moment, the recording companies follow tepidly in the wake of the 'nineteenth-century orchestral' public; when they venture outside it, as in Decca's new recording of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, the performance by Joan Taylor, Kathleen Ferrier, and the Boyd Neil Orchestra under Roy Henderson, is spoiled by lack of a scholarly authenticity. For instance, many of the appogiaturas are simply left out; this isn't just a pedantic quibble; it emasculates the harmony by removing the dissonances. Nonetheless these records are well worth having, for the music has a virginal charm, a quietly ecstatic glow conveyed largely through the airily dancing rhythms, which make it impossible for me to agree with a few very distinguished authorities who regard Pergolesi as an amateurish and over-rated composer. Kathleen Ferrier's voice is as beautiful in quality as ever, and the performance has many points of sympathy and sensitiveness, despite its frequent misinterpretations of eighteenth-century convention. The recording is not up to Decca's highest standard. Another recording by Decca of the same period is of Campoli playing Tartini's G minor sonata (not the Devil's Trill, but a much finer and less well known work). In this case the performance loses owing to the substitution of a piano for harpsichord and string bass. But Campoli's playing has a lucid refinement and a sense of style which is entirely convincing. I wish Decca would invite Campoli to record some (and eventually all) of the Bach solo sonatas and partitas. I know of no-one in the country capable of playing them more adequately.

The quarter's recordings bring out clearly enough that it is with music of the Bach and pre-Bach periods that an active tradition of performance has been lost; so that players can't hope to interpret this music convincingly without a certain amount of research and experiment. By playing simply the notes as they are on the printed page, even with music of Bach's time, one is often not playing the melodic contours, the harmonies, the rhythms the composer intended. (To some extent this is the case, as we have seen, with the Pergolesi recording). But from the eighteenth century symphonic composers onwards, a tradition of performance still survives. Consider two fine Mozart recordings in this quarter's batch; the tragic D minor quartet, played by the Hungarian Quartet (H.M.V.) and the second horn concerto, played by Dennis Brain and the Philharmonia Orchestra under Walter Susskind (Columbia). One can quibble about this point or the other in these performances; one can even perhaps find an excess of elegance in the wonderfully

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suave playing of the quartet. But one can have no doubt that the interpretations are right in principle. (Both works are mature Mozart, the quartet possibly the greatest of all Mozart's quartets, the horn concerto having a last movement which is one of the most richly comic pieces Mozart ever wrote). Still more, with Brahms and Schubert, there is a continuous tradition of performance; so that if, in the Menuhins' performance of Brahms' third violin sonata, or in Aksel Schiötz's singing of *Die Schöne Müllerin* (both H.M.V.), we find any shortcomings, it is not likely to be through any deficiency of knowledge, but through either a deficiency of taste, or of technique, or through a temperamental inability to penetrate the composer's mentality. To me, Schiötz does not seem to be a very sympathetic Schubert singer, nor is his technique impeccable. Menuhin's virtuosity we may take for granted, and the piano part of the Brahms is played with precision and intelligence. But the performance, perhaps intentionally, damps down Brahms' lyricism and that, in this most muscular and rugged of works, seems to me unnecessary.

The survival of a tradition of performance depends largely, I suppose, on fashion; certainly it is not merely a question of date, for if it is preserved in the case of Mozart and Brahms, it is almost lost in the case of a composer, Rossini, who chronologically comes between them. One reason for this is undoubtedly the decline of singing; it was convenient if one could be superior about the Italian virtuoso vocal music when one could no longer sing it. In modern times, Conchita Supervia's performance of *La Cenerentola* caught the authentic Rossinian note, the slightly impudent urbanity and stylish glitter. Jennie Tourel's performance hasn't the wit of Supervia's, but she sings Cinderella's delicious rondo with authority and assurance, and that is an achievement of which any singer can be proud. She is accompanied by the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under Cimara (Columbia).

Although the recording companies haven't so far shown any reflection of the Third Programme's pre-Bach enterprise, they do seem to show an increasing interest in contemporary music, which is possibly a sign of the times. Chief among a number of notable issues this quarter is an H.M.V. recording of a late work, the *Sinfonietta*, by that remarkable Czech composer Leos Janacek, brilliantly played by the Czech Philharmonic under Kubelik. This work displays the composer's extreme originality in dealing with material that appears to be simple almost to the point of naïveté. There is a 'primitive' folk culture behind the short, supple, lyrical phrases; but the aphoristic style is far removed from a Smetana-like geniality. What odd rhythmic and tonal convolutions the motives are submitted to; how disturbingly strange, and yet at the same time fresh and sanguine, is the orchestration, which reminds one more of seventeenth-century ceremonial music, written to be performed in the open air, than of the nineteenth-century concert hall. In a smaller way, we have here much of the quality that makes Janacek's *Mass of the Earth*, written in 1928, two years after the

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Sinfonietta, in my view one of the greatest works of our time. There is the same combination of the youthful vitality of a folk culture with an extreme sophistication—an awareness of the tensions and complexities of the contemporary world. These records deserve to rank in importance with those of the Bartók Fifth Quartet which were recently issued at the same very reasonable price.

A somewhat different version of the compromise between rurality and complexity which we find in Janacek, is manifested in Sibelius's *Tapiola*, which is given a superb performance and recording by Beecham and the R.P.O. on H.M.V. In Sibelius's music one isn't conscious of the presence of a folk culture, as one is in Janacek's, nor of any sophistication of techniques derived from folk music. Basically his idiom is European and nineteenth century; but he develops this style in an increasingly personal way, as he comes to understand more clearly what he wants to do. He is trying to convey an experience of nature; but it isn't just an imitation of the sounds of nature since if that were the whole story there'd be no comment to make except that (to paraphrase Dr. Johnson) Nature can do it so much better. It is, of course, the reactions of a human personality to the impersonal forces of nature which Sibelius is interested in; and it is perhaps the limitation of his genius that he became more interested in this experience than in the relations between human beings. Janacek is both a communal composer and a contemporary composer of isolation; Sibelius in his last and most significant work seems to me essentially a composer of isolation. I think this is why he developed away from the dualistic Beethovian symphony—with its conflict between the individual and a social and technical convention—to the 'self-generative' unity of the *Seventh Symphony* and *Tapiola*. Nor is it an accident that his late work has—in its austerer way—structural and harmonic similarities with the late work of Wagner, and even of Delius, the hyper-individualist. But Sibelius remains perhaps the greatest of the group of composers who attempted to convey this experience, and the frigid terror evoked by the climax of *Tapiola* represents the quintessence of his contribution. I think it is what, all his life, he was working towards, though it may seem in some way a less 'central' and civilized achievement than the fourth and sixth symphonies.

Yet another angle on the relation between the individual and society is suggested by Shostakovitch's Sixth Symphony, enthusiastically played by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, under Reiner, and given a recording which by American standards is first class. After the Janacek and Sibelius the music may seem rather trite, but it is by no means devoid of interest, and is to my mind immeasurably superior to the composer's overpraised, adolescently facetious first symphony. I prefer Shostakovitch as a Soviet Citizen, rather than as a Parisian *enfant terrible*. The first movement is an immensely long, introspective adagio, personal in mood, though owing much to the romantic rhetoric of Mahler and Tchaikowsky. The other two movements are perkily cynical, with bits of Rossini

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by way of Poulenc, in places unexpectedly delicate and sensitive. Again the spacing and scoring owe much to Mahler. The music seems derivative and diffuse compared with the Janacek, but one doesn't object to the many 'influences', which are of the kind which has been common to the Russian tradition ever since Glinka. It's probably healthier that Shostakovitch should be heir to an Italianate Tchaikowsky than to the indigenous Moussorgsky, for there is no longer much point in neo-primitivism—unless, like Janacek, you're a man of much stronger character than Shostakovitch is, and able to convert primitive material to a personal logic. But what seems to me unsatisfactory about this symphony is the disparity between the first movement and the other two. The individualism, the introspection, seem to be concentrated in the first movement, the social values—the 'entertainment'—in the others, and I can see no necessary connection between the two sets of values at all. I suppose Shostakovitch must have had some idea in mind, when composing a symphony on such an unusual plan; but he does not get it across, to this listener at least. It affects me as a characteristically over-simple account of the relation between the individual and society. Even the feeblest passages of this work, however, sound like first-class music compared with the Kabalevsky overture which fills up the odd side. This is pure *musique de société*, Pump Room stuff inflated on the modern orchestra.

For all his immaturities, Shostakovitch has a real flair for 'effect'; though less sensitive, his rhetorical outlook has something in common with that of Britten; and there is also some parallel between his attempt to relate the Russian national to a European (in particular Italian) style, and Britten's attempt to do the same for the English tradition. The indigenous Russian tradition is represented this quarter by a remarkable recording of Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, played with great power and rather unexpected subtlety by Moiseivitsch. This music never seems to me altogether happy in its pianistic dress; in essence it is theatre music, with all Moussorgsky's barbaric splendour and psychological insight. But it is certainly one of the most interesting piano works of the later nineteenth century, and this recording is mechanically excellent, and in every way highly recommended.

The European side of the Russian tradition is represented by Stravinsky's *Firebird*, in an authoritative performance by Ansermet and the L.P.O., and a Decca recording that rivals the famous version of *Petrouchka*, in its fire and delicacy. The music is, of course, an extension from Stravinsky's master, Rimsky Korsakov; nineteenth-century Russian exotic, with Italian opera and German symphonic poem latent in the music's technique. The 'national' elements are here rather of the picture postcard order, though no one would deny that the postcards are very pretty, painted by a genius. As he develops, Stravinsky acquires simultaneously a much deeper understanding of the native Russian tradition, and a much profounder idea of European culture. The whole problem of Russian music, as perhaps of Russian culture generally, derives

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from the fact that Russia had no Renaissance. In seeking for a native Russian style, Stravinsky thus turns partly to a mediaeval, partly to a primitive, inspiration. He then tries to achieve a synthesis of European musical culture which shall compensate for Russia's lack of a Renaissance; and in his finest work, such as the *Symphonie des Psaumes*, fuses the Russian (mediaeval and primitive) with the European (classical and theatrical) elements. As the years have gone by and Stravinsky has been twice deracinated, it has become increasingly difficult for him to achieve this equilibrium, which is why his latest (American) works may seem to lack the vitality of the compositions of the middle years. But these latest works are of great significance, because they honestly face up to the position that Stravinsky finds himself in. Looking back, it seems, at this date, that Stravinsky's evolution has been—despite its apparent convolutions—of an austere and remorseless logic. A most moderate and sensible account of Stravinsky's career and significance is given by Eric Walter White, in his recent book on the composer, published by John Lehmann (15/-). This book, intelligent in its general outlook, covers the whole of Stravinsky's work; though one must regret that it was not possible to illustrate the text with musical examples.

Vaughan Williams's *Flos Campi* and *The Lark Ascending* are not among his most impressive pieces, and certainly nowhere approach the level of the Fifth Symphony. They evade the central problem of the relation between the individual and society by being genre pieces. *The Lark Ascending* is an offshoot of the rhapsodic-pentatonic investigations of the *Pastoral Symphony*, though without the latter work's concentrated poetry. (A recording of the Pastoral, by the way, is long overdue). *Flos Campi* is a study in archaic exotica, with a most effective use of solo viola, and a wordless chorus. Except for the rather embarrassing pentatonic chopstick stuff in the middle, the work is moving and beautiful; but its beauty is more analogous to that of the better works of Bax (despite its austerer harmony) than to Vaughan Williams's own most representative work. Both recordings are good (*Flos Campi* H.M.V., the *Lark* Columbia), though *Flos Campi* has a hint of the raucousness that marred the recording of *Job*. William Primrose plays the viola solo with an appropriate voluptuousness.

Among other miscellaneous recordings sent for review I must mention two songs of Fauré, *Arpège* and *Clair de Lune*, sung by Gerard Souzay with a velvety tone and sensitive phrasing, but with a certain effeminacy which is not really appropriate, even to Fauré's most seductive music (Decca). Another touching Fauré piece of his middle period, written about the same time as the Requiem, is the *Pavane*, performed in the original version with orchestra and chorus, by the Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under Sargent (Columbia). This work loses considerably when it is performed without the chorus parts. Records of the orchestral suite from Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* and the Cesar Franck A minor *Chorale* I will pass over since I find the music repellent. I should

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add, however, that Fernando Germani's organ playing is of remarkable virtuosity, and that the recording of the Franck is easily the best recording of the sound of an organ I have heard. Both these circumstances make one look forward pleasurably to Germani's promised recording of the Bach B minor prelude and fugue. Another magnificent Italian artist, the pianist Micelangeli, is wasted on two Spanish picture postcard pieces. If something Spanish was required, why not something from Albeniz's *Iberia*, of which this player would give a superb performance.

In future, this music chronicle will be divided into three sections. The first will cover outstanding broadcasts during the past quarter; the second will deal with records of some exceptional interest; and the third will discuss any new musical books of importance.

In the next issue, I shall include comments on broadcasts; notes on the performance of eighteenth-century music, centred around new recordings of works by Bach, Handel, Marcello, Mozart and others; and reviews of St. Foix's book on Mozart's symphonies, and of Adèle Katz's *Challenge to Musical Tradition*.

W. H. MELLERS.

CORRESPONDENCE

Palazzo Borghese, Rome.

19th June, 1947.

Gentlemen,

In his review of my *Selected Poems* in *Scrutiny* for Spring, 1947, Mr. Mason makes a very odd remark: 'If these lines were composed before Mr. Bottrall had read *Little Gidding*, he should in self-defence have mentioned the fact'. On what compulsion? The lines were, in fact, drafted in the Autumn of 1941 and finished in their final form in June/July 1942, long before I had read *Little Gidding*—I was then in Sweden, where books came slowly and late. I ought, perhaps, also to say that *Distance has Magic* was drafted in the Autumn of 1939 and finished in the Spring of 1941, when I had read only *Burnt Norton* of the *Four Quartets*.

The reason why I did not state (where? in a footnote?) that I had not read *Little Gidding* when I wrote *Freedom Lies in Acceptance* is that, until I saw Mr. Mason's review it had never struck me that there was any resemblance between the two poems. It would be very trying, anyhow, if a poet had always to list at the bottom of each of his poems works he had *not* read, particularly if, as in this case, the other work had not, at the time of writing, been published.

I am very grateful to Mr. Mason for pointing out the stupid misprint of 'understanding' for 'understudying' on page 11 of *S.P.*

Yours faithfully,

RONALD BOTTRALL.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

HENRY JAMES'S FIRST NOVEL

RODERICK HUDSON, by Henry James (*John Lehmann*, 8/6).

Mr. John Lehmann is to be thanked for putting *Roderick Hudson* into circulation. Perhaps it will now be read. And if it is read—really read—it will cause some surprised enjoyment. For its reputation has not been of a kind to get it picked out from among the shelf-fuls of Henry James in the library. The current impression since James began to 'come in' has been, I think, that *Roderick Hudson* is at best no better than negligible—just what you would expect a first novel to be. After the war of 1914, sampling some lecture-courses for the English Tripos, I went to one on 'The Modern Novel', given by the young advanced intellectual, the intransigent anti-academic, of the day and a good index of what 'the few who can talk intelligently . . . ' (etc.) were saying, and he told us how James, in revising, had changed Roderick's exclamation, 'It's like something in a novel', into 'It's like something in a bad novel'. Nothing more, one gathered, needed saying: here was the authoritative dismissal.

Actually, that reading of the revision is utterly unwarranted. As Mr. Michael Swan, adducing evidence, tells us in the introductory note to the present edition, Henry James, looking back, thought highly of this early work. This is not surprising: *Roderick Hudson* is an extremely interesting and extremely distinguished novel. For a first novel it is very remarkable indeed—remarkable in its maturity and in its accomplishment. And it was written in the mid-Victorian age—begun in 1874, when *Daniel Deronda*, which was to influence James so profoundly, had not yet appeared. Of the English novelists of his time, his seniors or co-evals, George Eliot alone can be thought of as having much, in the way of instruction and incitement, to give a writer bent, as James was, on making the writing of novels a completely serious art, and there is no reason for seeing *Roderick Hudson* as markedly indebted to her. The debt that can, as I shall show later, be noted is to Dickens, in whom no one will suppose James to have found the model or the inspiration for an art addressed consistently and calculatingly to the adult mind, and demanding its sustained critical attention. In *Roderick Hudson*, when all criticisms have been urged, we have such an art, so that James's first novel has better claims to classical currency—is more worth reading and re-reading, than the greater number of Victorian fictions that are commonly offered us as classics.

James has a real theme—a theme qualified to engage the full powers of a highly intelligent mind, widely experienced and profoundly interested in human potentialities. What is astonishing is that, in his first 'attempt' (his own words), he should have been able to show so sufficient an answering mastery of art. For, in

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spite of shortcomings that he himself notes in the late Preface, *Roderick Hudson* is, substantially, an achieved work. It exhibits no crudities, no redundancies, and no uncertainties of purpose. The technical preoccupation is already most distinctively Jamesian. It is true that what particularly strike one as characteristic felicities in the writing turn out again and again to have come in with the late revision, yet it didn't need this to make the writing wonderfully intelligent, brilliant and sensitive.

If one took one's cue from the title—and it is remarkable what persistent anaesthesias can plead no better excuse—one might judge that James had been overweening in his choice of theme. Imagine a sculptor-born, but born in a small town of pristine New England. Transported in early manhood to Europe, to Rome, how will he respond to the sudden impact of 'an immemorial, a complex and accumulated civilization', with all its visible witness, its overwhelming revelation, of art. (In Rowland Mallet's praise 'he had heard absolutely for the first time in his life the voice of taste and authority'). It is an interesting idea, but how, one might comment, could it conceivably be *done*, seeing that to *do* the postulated genius is obviously impossible—postulated is all it can, in the nature of things, be? Isn't it a mark of the young James's callowness that he shouldn't have seen the disqualifying force of this objection? He was indeed in later years, in some of his best *nouvelles*, to deal successfully with the writer as writer; but writing was something he knew from the inside—*that* was *his* genius, and it had a major part in his life. But what did he know about sculpture or the visual arts? Wasn't his very ignorance, or naïvety, about them a condition of the confidence with which he committed himself to the undertaking? This is the best he can do by way of evoking one of Roderick's masterpieces (the bust of Christina Light):

> 'The bust was in fact a very happy performance—Roderick had risen to the level of his subject. It was thoroughly a portrait —not a vague fantasy executed on a graceful theme, as the busts of pretty women in modern sculpture are apt to be. The resemblance was close and firm; inch matched inch, item with item, grain with grain, yet all to fresh creation. It succeeded by an exquisite art in representing without extravagance something that transcended and exceeded'.

Even as strengthened in the revised phrasing—it ran earlier: 'there was extreme fidelity of detail, and yet a noble simplicity. One could say that, without idealization, it was a representation of ideal beauty'—this kind of thing hardly helps our conventional assent to the postulate. And isn't James disablingly romantic in his notion of creative genius? Isn't he merely offering us in his Roderick Hudson—incontinently 'spontaneous' and, when the afflatus comes, an inspired *enfant terrible*, but otherwise childish in irresponsibility, moody and inflammable—a conventional 'artistic temperament', and asking us to believe that great works of art can issue out of that?

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But to criticize the book on these lines is to ignore what it actually offers. As James himself says in the late Preface, 'the centre of interest throughout . . . is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness'—'and this in spite of the title of the book'. What he tells us he aimed at doing is what, with an art already extraordinarily Jamesian and mature, he has done. Rowland's consciousness was to be not 'too acute', but 'a sufficiently clear medium to present a whole'. 'This whole was to be the sum of what "happened" to him, or in other words his total adventure; but as what happened to him was above all to feel certain things happening to others, to Roderick, to Christina, to Mary Garland, to Mrs. Hudson, to the Cavaliere, to the Prince, so the beauty of the constructional game was to preserve in everything its especial value for *him*'.

James in telling us this is explaining how it should be that the weakness he remarks in the treatment of Roderick, whose break-up under exposure to Europe occurs too rapidly, isn't fatal to the book. The same considerations explain why the offer to make creative genius, in the person of a sculptor, a major actor in the drama wasn't disastrous. What had to be conveyed was the impression on Rowland Mallet—*his* conviction confirmed by that of the world in general that peoples Rowland's drama; and that one must judge to be sufficiently *done*. Nor is any crudely romantic notion of genius endorsed by James or by Rowland. In fact, to explore the nature of genius is one of the aims of the book, and a questioning of the relation of creative power to the 'artistic temperament' constitutes one of Rowland's central preoccupations. He is surprised, disconcerted and shocked by the progressive exposure of Roderick's lack of ballast and excess of egotism and irresponsibility. He had believed in the 'essential salubrity of genius', and we have every reason for associating him with Mary Garland when we learn about her that she 'had supposed genius to be to one's spiritual economy what a large balance at the bank is to one's domestic'. Such an assumption clearly doesn't strike James as merely a revelation of naïvety.

There is characteristic Jamesian art in the way in which Roderick is played off on the one hand against Sam Singleton, developing a small talent with conscientious and pedestrian industry, and, on the other, against Gloriani, who represents 'art with a mixed motive, skill unleavened by faith, the mere base maximum of cleverness'—represents the sophistication and corruption of cosmopolitan Europe. 'He had a definite, practical scheme of art, and he knew at least what he meant. In this sense he was almost too knowing'. (There is, too, paired against Singleton, another kind of accomplished limitation: mere academic industry, in the person of the innocent and skilful Miss Blanchard). By his dramatic and poetic methods James is clearly working towards the suggestion of a positive idea of genius that agrees pretty much with Mary Garland's. Again and again the critical and constructive intention becomes explicit in dramatic utterances or reported reflections, as for instance the letter to his cousin Cecilia in which Rowland

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writes: 'I think it established that in the long run egotism (in too big a dose) makes a failure in conduct; is it also true that it makes a failure in the arts?'

But we have here only part of the theme or system of interests that gives *Roderick Hudson* its life, organization and significance. The 'drama' of 'Rowland Mallet's consciousness' enacts, in James's first novel, that critical-constructive preoccupation with the 'international theme' which is so radically and persistently characteristic of James's own genius. Rowland Mallet, with the significantly mixed ancestry of which we are so carefully told, has been 'brought up to think much more intently of the duties of our earthly pilgrimage than of its privileges and pleasures'. Become a man of independent means, with no need or call to work, he devotes himself to his un-Puritanic interest in art, but suspects all the same that 'he wholly lacks the prime requisite of an expert *flâneur*—the simple, sensuous, confident relish of pleasure'. He is 'for ever looking for the uses of the things that please and the charm of the things that sustain'.

As even these brief quotations suggest (especially the second), James's attitude towards America—here, of course, it is New England in particular—isn't a simple one. Nor is his attitude towards Europe. What he dramatizes in this novel, as in later ones, is a complex process of comparative appraisal, out of which emerges the suggestion of an ideal positive that is neither Europe nor America. Of the aspect of American civilization represented by Mr. Leavenworth James may be said to be simply critical; the satire 'places' unambiguously, and there is little suggestion of any compensating entry to be made on the other side of the account:

> 'Mr. Leavenworth was a tall, expansive, bland gentleman, with a carefully-brushed whisker and a spacious, fair, well-favoured face, which seemed somehow to have more room in it than was occupied by a smile of superior benevolence, so that (with his smooth white forehead) it bore a certain resemblance to a large parlour with a very florid carpet, but without mural decoration. He held his head high, talked impressively, and told Roderick within five minutes that he was widower travelling to distract his mind, and that he had lately retired from the proprietorship of large mines of borax in the Middle West. Roderick supposed at first that under the influence of his bereavement he had come to order a tombstone; but observing the extreme benevolence of his address to Miss Blanchard he credited him with a judicious prevision that on the day the tombstone should be completed a monument of his inconsolability might appear mistimed. Mr. Leavenworth, however, was disposed to give an Order,—to give it with a capital letter.
>
> "You'll find me eager to patronise our indigenous talent", he said. "You may be sure that I've employed a native architect for the large residential structure that I'm erecting on the banks of the Ohio. I've sustained a considerable loss; but are we not

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told that the office of art is second only to that of religion? That's why I have come to you, sir. In the retreat that I'm preparing, surrounded by the memorials of my wanderings, I hope to recover a certain degree of tone. They're doing what they can in Paris for the fine effect of some of its features; but the effect I have myself most at heart will be that of my library, filled with well-selected and beautifully-bound authors in groups relieved from point to point by high-class statuary. I should like to entrust you, can we arrange it, with the execution of one of these appropriate subjects. What do you say to a representation, in pure white marble, of the idea of Intellectual Refinement?"

"Whose idea, sir?" Roderick asked. "Your idea?"

But at this question, and especially at a certain sound in it, Mr. Leavenworth looked a little blank. Miss Blanchard artfully interposed, "I wish I could induce Mr. Hudson to think he might perhaps do something with mine!"

It immediately relieved the tension and made Mr. Hudson consider her with great gravity. "If your idea resembles your personal type, Miss Blanchard, I quite *see* my figure. I close with you on Intellectual Refinement, Mr. Leavenworth, if this lady will sit for us" '.

I have quoted this passage at some length, because it illustrates well James's debt to Dickens. Dickens couldn't have written it; it comes from a more cultivated mind. ('Whose idea, sir?' Roderick asked. 'Your idea?'). Yet the debt to *Martin Chuzzlewit* is unmistakable, and it is plain that what James got from Dickens was not merely a manner, but a cue for 'placing' critically certain aspects of the American scene. (Much could be written on this debt in relation to James's later work).

But mostly what James sees in America calls for more complex and delicate attitudes than that of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, even when it calls for the satirically critical note. Mr. Striker, for instance, (see Chapter III) is a different case from Mr. Leavenworth:

' "An antique, as I understand it", the lawyer continued, "is an image of a pagan deity, with considerable dirt sticking to it, and no arms, no nose and no clothing. A precious model, certainly".

. . . . . .

"Now this study of the living model", Mr. Striker pursued. "Give Mrs. Hudson a sketch of that".

"Oh dear, no!" cried Mrs. Hudson shrinkingly.

"That too", said Rowland, "is one of the reasons for studying in Rome. It's a handsome race, you know, and you find very well-made people".

"I suppose they're no better than a good tough Yankee", objected Mr. Striker, transposing his interminable legs. "The same God made us!" '

—It might seem that the entry was to be made all on one side

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here too. But by the time we have read Mr. Striker's closing speech we are aware that the business of appraisal is not so simple as that:

> ' "I didn't go to any part of Europe to learn my business; no one took me by the hand; I had to grease my wheels myself, and such as I am, I'm a self-made man, every inch of me! Well, if our young friend's booked for fame and fortune I don't suppose his going to Rome will stop him. But, mind you, it won't help him such a long way neither. If you've undertaken to put him through there's a thing or two you had better remember. The crop we gather depends upon the seed we sow. He may be the biggest genius of the age: his potatoes won't come up without his hoeing them if he takes things so almighty easy as—well, as one or two young fellows of genius I've had under my eye—his produce will never gain the prize. Take the word for it of a man who has made his way inch by inch and doesn't believe that we wake up to find our work done because we have lain all night a-dreaming of it: anything worth doing is plaguy hard to do!" '

Rowland makes the credit entry for us; he, we are told, 'could honestly reply that this seemed pregnant sense, and he offered Mr. Striker a friendly hand-shake as the latter withdrew'.

But it is when we come to Mary Garland, the counter-figure to Christina Light, *femme fatale* and product and representative of corrupt and corrupting Europe, that we have the separating out of the American elements that James peculiarly values. 'Miss Garland', says Mr. Striker, introducing her, 'is the daughter of a minister, the grand-daughter of a minister, the sister of a minister'. That is, she is meant to give us the essential New England ethos, and her presentment expresses a positive and warmly sympathetic appreciation that forecasts *The Europeans*. It was not long after the introduction before Rowland had 'passed from measuring contours to tracing meanings', for 'she appealed strongly to his sense of character'. She is very intelligent, and not at all incapable of developing an interest in art, as she proves when Roderick's collapse brings her, with his mother, to Rome. She concludes finally that 'man wasn't made to struggle so much and miss so much, but to ask of life as a matter of course some beauty and some charm'. But she is incorruptible. And James clearly admires with Rowland 'the purity and rigidity of a mind that had not lived with its door ajar upon the high-road of cosmopolite chatter, for passing phrases to drop in and out at their pleasure, but that had none the less looked out, from the threshold, for any straggler on the "march of ideas", any limping rumour or broken-winged echo of life, that would stop and be cherished as a guest'. For James she clearly represents a cherished possibility—a distinctively American possibility: 'She might have been originally as angular as he had, on the other scene, liked her for being; but who was to say now what mightn't result from the cultivation in her of a motive for curves?'

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Mary Garland may not be as positively a triumph as Christina Light, yet she is not a failure. Her part in any case isn't to hold the lime-light. James himself in the Preface questions the convincingness of her relations with Roderick. Wasn't it too convenient that Roderick just at that improbable moment (as James see it) should imagine himself to fall in love with such a girl, and so effectively, with ironic consequences for Rowland? But, whatever weaknesses may be detected in it, *Roderick Hudson* is a most interesting success. It is a minor work in the Jamesian *œuvre*; but even in comparison with the great things it deserves better than to be spoken of slightingly.

F. R. LEAVIS.

THE POETIC IMAGE, by C. Day Lewis (Cape, 8/6).

The Clark Lecturer for 1946 begins with some arch comments on critics and criticism and some coy hesitations about entering a field which, as a poet, he finds strange and unfamiliar. Other poet-critics from Dryden to Mr. Eliot have not found this kind of mock-modesty necessary, but it is typical of a certain naïveté that pervades the whole book. With it goes a disarming ease of manner, a safe eclecticism (the first chapter draws on Coleridge, Middleton Murry, T. E. Hulme, H. W. Garrod, Herbert Read, Christopher Caudwell and Charles Williams, among others) and an apparent inability to come to grips with any serious critical problem. The whole discussion is in fact misconceived from the start: it is impossible to isolate 'the image' in this way. Imagery may provide a useful starting-point for the discussion of poetry, but little progress can be made without raising questions of realization and its control, movement, tone, attitude and so on, which demand a method of practical criticism far more disciplined and sensitive in its use of analysis and judgment than anything offered here.

'Wishing to undertake some theme which might throw light upon the poetry of our own time, yet believing it the most serious defect in modern criticism that this poetry is not sufficiently related and shown in perspective with the great vistas of the English poetic tradition, I seemed to find what I wanted in the poetic image . . . the image is the constant in all poetry, and every poem is itself an image'. The subject, in fact, is the nature of poetry itself, a matter on which nothing profitable can be said that is not firmly rooted in particular perceptions and judgments. In spite of a great show of examples and illustrations much of Mr. Day Lewis's discussion is in general terms of a familiar type. The first chapter, on *The Nature of the Image*, goes over the ground of the origin of poetry in 'the great educative myths which . . . enticed man forward out of his brutishness' etc., discusses the nature of poetic truth, which comes from 'the perception of a unity underlying and relating all phenomena', and concludes that 'the poetic image is the human mind claiming kinship with everything that lives or has lived, and making good its claim'. The second chapter, on *The Field of Imagery*, says that what we chiefly look for in imagery

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is freshness, intensity and evocative power, but that only the first two can be gauged objectively. With these inadequate instruments Mr. Day Lewis analyses the different uses to which imagery has been put by poets from the Elizabethans to the Romantics. The Romantic image, we are told, is 'a mode of exploring reality by which the poet is in effect asking imagery to reveal to him the meaning of his own experience': does this really mean anything? The chapter ends with five examples of personification as used by Marvell, Collins, Keats, Rossetti and Auden, in which we are asked to see 'a steady rise of colour, of sensuousness and intensity' and to accept this as a typical development.

The Pattern of Images discusses the methods of poetic creation, the way the poet builds up into a pattern the images presented by his unconscious mind so that a consistency of impression is achieved which is the sign of a successful ordering of experience. The illustrations include some simple analyses—of Keats's successive revisions of a line in *Hyperion*, of Browning's *Two in the Campagna* and of Herbert's *The Collar*—which are quite useful as far as they go; but the lack of any sound basis of critical comparison appears when these are followed by two pages on *Modern Love*. Mr. Day Lewis can even accept the empty and pretentious 'Lucifer' sonnet as a great poem: he describes Meredith as 'apart from Browning, the highest intelligence at work upon poetry in modern times', and he finds recurring key images which bind *Modern Love* together 'on something the same principle as that of the key images in Valéry's *Cimetière Marin*'.

A chapter on *The Living Image* raises the question how far the poet can successfully make use of objects like aeroplanes and engines in metaphor, points out the dangers of obsolescence (in the manner of the seventeenth-century epicycles and planispheres) and forecasts 'a high rate of mortality among such specifically modern images because of the poetic conditions in which they live'. Modern poetry is said to lack confidence in explicit statement, which could be an instrument 'to clarify, relate and prolong the life of our novel or highly personal imagery'. (Just how is not very clear, in spite of the illustrations—a phrase of Yeats, a 'great surging poetic generalization' from *Modern Love*, and a tentative reference to *Four Quartets*). There is therefore a strain upon technique caused by the tendency 'to concentrate more and more of the poem's meaning within its images' either by their intensity and compression or by sheer accumulation. This is a point capable of being put to critical use, but Mr. Day Lewis hardly takes the opportunity. He tells us that Auden succeeds with the method of accumulation because 'his grasp of a wide contemporary situation and his insight into its patterns create themes powerful enough to vivify and relate images which might otherwise have seemed perfunctory', and the supporting example doesn't do much to justify the dubious generalization.

His answer to those who advise a return to 'the old changeless subjects of poetry—love, death, nature' is that owing to historical

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and social developments our response to these subjects changes:

> 'The love-poems of the Celian moment, or the nostalgic, regretful love poems of the late Victorians still delight us to-day, not because love is changeless (if it was, there would not be such an extraordinary contrast between the tone of seventeenth-century and nineteenth-century love poetry) but because each of these two kinds of poetry was true to the love-relationship of its time and place'.

Does this mean that the difference between, say, *The Definition of Love* and *Love is Enough* is to be explained in purely social terms? It will be seen that Mr. Day Lewis has a respect for established literary values which must have comforted the more conservative of his academic audience. He quotes Raleigh with approval on the impossibility of analysing Christina Rossetti's poetry, instancing 'When I am dead, my dearest' with 'O rose, thou art sick' and 'Take, oh take those lips away' as pure lyrics—'Such quicksilver poems glide away from the critical touch: they offer no opening by which criticism may enter to hatch its parasitic theories'. It is useless to protest that one has seen adequate analyses of two at least of these poems and that the third doesn't seem in any way impossible: the attitude is familiar enough, and we are not altogether surprised to come later upon a word for the Georgians:

> 'The true personal poetry is under something of a cloud just now: we tend to condemn the "Georgian" poets wholesale, for instance, on the grounds that they wrote about their own personal relationships with trivial objects and their poems were therefore trivial. But the verdict has no more logic than charity behind it. No subject remains trivial when the poetic imagination has done with it'.

Must one explain that the only criticism of the Georgians that matters is precisely of their failure in poetic imagination?

Broken Images deals with the apparent anarchy of the modern poet's use of imagery and discusses various defences of different types of current practice. Mr. Day Lewis uses an account by Mr. Dylan Thomas of his creative method as a basis for discussing one of the latter's own poems, contrasts *Harry Ploughman* with *Felix Randall*, analyses a poem by Mr. George Barker not very convincingly and contrasts two passages by Mr. David Gascoyne. He comes to the conclusion that there is a dangerous 'centrifugal force' in the images of modern poetry and that it has sacrificed variety and humanity in sounding the depths of individual experience. Here as elsewhere the argument is confused by a lack of critical standards.

It seems hardly necessary to pursue the windings of this desultory discussion into the last chapter, which leaves us safe at sea among the Archetypal Patterns. A peroration addressing the poets of the future brings the lectures to an end on a decorous note of vague nobility.

R. G. Cox.

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FOLK SONGS OF CHHATTISGARH, by Verrier Elwin (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, Indian Branch, 1946. 25/- net).

There may be some question whether this book is to be valued chiefly as a cultural record or as a contribution to translated literature, but no one can doubt the value, from one point of view or another, of its having been written and published. It is the outcome of what must have been patient, persistent work and trusted companionship among the relatively primitive peoples, of Hindu culture, in a huge area in the east of the Central Provinces. The translations are agreeable and unaffected, individual enough in flavour to make it clear that the minimum of preconceived western style is being imposed on the originals.

For people concerned with literature and general culture this is perhaps the best sort of anthropology. The picture it gives is blurred and casual compared with the systematic account of details offered by well-trained visiting anthropologists. But it succeeds, gradually and cumulatively, where they often fail, in producing the impression of a different but understandable kind of human life, not described and talked about from the standpoint of an outsider but communicated by the people in their songs, songs which are here very evidently a heightened form of village conversation and story-telling. Dr. Elwin includes some useful commentary and anthropological explanations, and more might have been a help to those of us who are not well read in Indian anthropology and social institutions. But even for us the customs and beliefs of the people, and their predominant interests and sentiments, emerge convincingly; and we get something of the flavour of their attitudes towards marriage, procreation, work, hunger, danger, magic and romantic love. As a record of the spirit of an unfamiliar people, and the special variety of human experience that their culture makes possible, the book is admirable.

I feel more doubtful whether the translations make so significant a contribution to English literature as Mr. Archer suggests in his introductory Comment. They are in free verse and the lines, although pleasant to read, are only occasionally organized with rhythmical cogency; usually the words could have been varied a good deal without much rhythmical loss. The songs rely enormously on imagery and symbolism presented without explicit statement of their latent meaning—as with the symbols of dreams and children's play—and in this respect the translations reinforce an already strong tendency in modern European writing. Mostly the symbols are drawn from local customs, plants and so on, exotic enough to demand a rather deliberate mental manoeuvre before their force can be felt by a stranger to the culture. But in dealing with the simpler facts of sexual activity, rightly stressed by Mr. Archer as one of their most intense concerns, the songs offer a more familiar, less local symbolism.

A tireless interest in the physical aspect of sexual attractions and relationships contributes—is probably the most important con-

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tribution—to the effect, which this book overpoweringly has, of making one realize more fully what the word 'primitive' means. Under the romanticizing influence of writers who ricochetted from the repressed or from the trivially sophisticated to the 'primitive' we are inclined to forget the implication of rudimentary and undeveloped in that word. Dr. Elwin's picture is of a people really primitive: however appealing and in many ways healthy, their culture is preoccupied at simple levels and only hints at some of the human possibilities that the more developed cultures realize. For this reason, Mr. Archer's comparison of Dr. Elwin's contribution to translated literature with Arthur Waley's breaks down. The Chinese culture which Arthur Waley's work reflected was not only different from ours but was highly enough developed to be relevant to us over a wide range. Chhattisgarh culture makes contact with us at only a few points.

The primitive quality as a positive value in these songs will appeal most to people who are still absorbed in reacting against sexual taboos. This provides one of the links with some modern European writing, a linkage that both Dr. Elwin and Mr. Archer are anxious to demonstrate. To me it seems a defect, the zeal with which resemblances are sought between these songs and the productions of recent Western authors (ranging from T. S. Eliot to Geoffrey Grigson). Many in Mr. Archer's eclectic sweep are obviously ephemeral, and I feel no doubt that translations as convincing as Dr. Elwin's of material as interesting as the songs of Chhattisgarh will long outlive the memory of some of the writers so oddly embedded in the notes and commentary. D.W.H.

Having been obliged in the last number of *Scrutiny* to report unfavourably on Mr. Garnett's attempt to introduce Henry James by a selection of short stories, I am glad to be able to refer readers to Mr. Philip Rahv's *The Great Short Novels of Henry James* (Dial Press Inc., New York, 1944) for a demonstration of how such an undertaking can be realized. Mr. Rahv's is a solid volume containing not 'the short novels' but many of the best of Henry James's long short stories—the *genre* in which he excelled. The choice is admirable, the only possible cavil is at being given *The Siege of London* when one would rather have had the indispensable *Pandora*. There is a model introductory essay on Henry James in half-a-dozen pages, and there are good short notes—literary criticism, generally helpful and never impertinent—prefixed to each story, that on *The Beast in the Jungle* being the most memorable. Mr. Rahv's is certainly *the* volume to introduce new readers to Henry James, and one would like it to be available in this country. I understand that F. O. Matthiessen brought out during the War a collection of all James's stories about writers and artists, for which one has hitherto had to rummage many volumes of the collected edition. This collection has long been needed, and must be seen to be of much greater interest than the disappointing *Prefaces* long ago edited by R. P. Blackmur, which stand so high in conventional esteem. Q.D.L.

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ALBERT CAMUS: DIFFICULT HOPE

LA PESTE, by Albert Camus (*Gallimard*, 200 fr.).

The appearance of this novel after five years' silence is heartening to those who 'felt' rather than could demonstrate that *The Outsider* was far from representing the total attitude of an author whose literary standing was bound up with the vindication of an outlook on life with claims to comprehensiveness. At any rate *La Peste* now provides an opportunity for examining in and through a literary work the 'enacting' of principles which were quoted as mere statements from a series of 'open letters'.

The change in perspective is not, however, quite as great as one could wish, although the predominance of construction and intelligent distancing in *The Outsider* might have given added weight to the following quotation from *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, which seem to express the author's *intentions* as an artist:

> 'Il y a un certain rapport entre l'expérience globale d'un artiste et l'oeuvre qui la reflète, entre Wilhelm Meister et la maturité de Goethe. Ce rapport est mauvais lorsque l'oeuvre prétend donner toute l'expérience dans le papier à dentelles d'une littérature d'explication. Ce rapport est bon lorsque l'oeuvre n'est qu'un morceau taillé dans l'expérience, une facette du diamant où l'éclat intérieur se résume sans se limiter. Dans le premier cas, il y a surcharge et prétention à l'éternel. Dans le second, oeuvre féconde à cause de tout un sous-entendu d'expérience dont on devine la richesse'.

Nothing in *The Outsider* seems to 'flash out' or allow us to guess that the author could so oppose himself to the attitude of the hero of that novel as he seemed to be doing in the letter addressed to 'un ami allemand' (*cf. Scrutiny*, Vol. xiv, No. 2, p. 89) where he refused to despair or abandon the values of civilization and protested: 'il m'apparaissait au contraire que l'homme devait affirmer la justice pour lutter contre l'injustice éternelle, créer du bonheur pour protester contre l'univers du malheur . . . et moi, refusant d'admettre ce désespoir et ce monde torturé, je voulais seulement que les hommes retrouvent leur solidarité pour entrer en lutte contre leur destin révoltant . . . '

Consequently, to write, 'It may be that M. Camus will now be able to present a man with these qualities, a hero who is capable of doing as well as suffering' must be considered a dubious sort of literary extrapolation, particularly when we consider the heroics from which M. Camus had never succeeded in freeing the expositions of his attitude. He seemed, for instance, to ignore all that tempers our admiration of Don Juan hurling defiance at the gods. There was a good deal of legerdemain in his attempt to maintain at the same time both the grandeur and the uselessness of life. In choosing to consider Sisyphe ***happy*** in the execution of

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his task he passed over the fact that he was condemned to it against his will. And to arrive at the conception of life as a 'voie sans issue où tous sont engagés' he seems to have taken a number of short cuts which violate *la règle du jeu*—the complete honesty, the total exposure to experience and the willingness to follow the intelligence to its limits, which he himself laid down as the procedure he was trying to follow.

La Peste fails in one respect to dispel the doubts about the fairness of his play. For M. Camus has chosen as the vehicle of his ideas the account of an imaginary plague arising out of the depths of the earth, impossible to control by medical skill and passing away as mysteriously as it arose. Now, while this corresponds perfectly to the *malheur* at the centre of *The Outsider*, the unpredictable eruption which cuts short human life or severely limits human possibilities—'personne ne sera jamais libre tant qu'il y aura des fléaux'—our imagination refuses to link this story of a plague year with the 'years of occupation', an operation which M. Camus is subtly suggesting throughout the book, at least as long as we regard *that malheur* as in part a human catastrophe raising the problem of human responsibility. Secondly, as the novel develops we are invited to consider wider implications. One character remarks: 'Mais qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, la peste? C'est la vie, et voilà tout'. This implication, as I hope to show, is not grounded in the concrete situation.

Deliberate as are the limitations M. Camus has set himself, they nevertheless constitute an element of strength. All that was said of the firm command, the distancing, the style that gives uniformity to a lucid intellectual construction, in criticizing *The Outsider*, may be repeated with even greater conviction of *La Peste*. M. Camus has laboured to give the reader the pleasure of contact with a personal philosophy from which the purely personal has as far as possible been withdrawn. We are evidently to take the story as a 'myth': it only remains to determine what sort of myth. In describing this journal of the plague year as a vehicle, I had in mind the distinction between the novel proper and the 'moralized fable'. M. Camus has not created (and perhaps could not) the illusion of 'life' to such an extent that we seek to explore every corner of his Oran—the town visited by the plague—to enrich our sense of the total meaning of *La Peste*. The choice of incident, the characters, the scenic descriptions are dictated by the desire to point to something else. But the myth has no poetic life, no richness and density, but just sufficient concreteness to carry the reflections on experience and the philosophical attitude.

Once we have recognized the genre, or, as readers, begin to direct our thoughts and feelings away from the particulars of the journal to the other particulars which are felt to be the true reference, the focus of attention is seen to be a scheme of values, those values, in fact, which were discussed in the philosophic essay and mentioned in the open letters. *La Peste* in a sense replaces these works and marks a significant advance on them. If this is so, the

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critical attention should be concentrated on the actions and thoughts of those characters in the novel whose presence is justified by the kind of reference outwards the whole novel suggests. The drawback of an intellectual construction where everything is so carefully planned is the difficulty of overcoming the suspicion that crucial incidents may have been 'planted'—in the sense that incriminating evidence may be 'discovered' by the police who put it there—by the author for the sake of illustrating his pre-conceived scheme. One major example deserves discussion later on. A less damaging case is to be found in all that is narrated of a criminal named Cottard, who might be called a *collaborateur* with the plague. He is done very much from the outside and although the anti-social element obviously required doing, is in fact an indispensable part of any account of the 'mal de l'époque', Cottard is too much of a convenience and not enough of an imaginative creation.

The hero of *La Peste*, the writer of the journal, is a doctor who describes himself as 'un homme lassé du monde où il vivait, ayant pourtant le goût de ses semblables et décidé à refuser, pour sa part, l'injustice et les concessions'. Later on he gives a more comprehensive account of himself. He had discovered at the outset of his medical career that the fact of death was something he could not get used to or become reconciled to. 'J'étais jeune alors et mon dégoût croyait s'adresser à l'ordre même du monde. Depuis je suis devenu plus modeste . . . mais puisque l'ordre du monde est réglé par la mort, peut-être vaut-il mieux pour Dieu qu'on ne croie pas en lui et qu'on lutte de toutes ses forces contre la mort, sans lever les yeux vers ce ciel où il se tait'. And he decides that it is worth while struggling even though he is bound to be defeated in the end. The worth of the struggle is measured by the sense of the values extinguished by death. Heroism, it should be noted, is now relegated to second place, 'juste après, et jamais avant, l'exigence généreuse du bonheur'. The horror of the plague is shown to lie chiefly in the deprivation and separation of those bound by the ties of affection and love. A special character is introduced to underline the point that human solidarity requires the sacrifice even of that which alone makes life worth living. He is a Parisian journalist who begins by protesting 'je suis étranger à cette ville' and tries to escape, but in the end comes to see that 'il peut y avoir de la honte à être heureux tout seul' and that he really belongs to the town. The efforts of the doctor and the band of volunteers to save what could be saved are measured in terms of their conscious sacrifice of all that they value. The glimpse of the ties so broken by consent or by death is sufficient to dispose of the idea that M. Camus knew of no other values than those exhibited in *The Outsider*.

In order to bring out further the faith that sustains the doctor, two contrasting views are presented. One is that of he Christian faith. A Jesuit priest is brought face to face with a child dying in agony. The priest cannot believe that the eternity of bliss possibly awaiting the child outweighs the suffering endured. He is

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driven into admitting the scandal of willing the child's suffering because God wills it. Either that or nothing. The acceptance of this difficult belief brings on a fever and he dies. This summary cannot do justice to the sympathetic treatment he receives in the novel—another point of difference with *The Outsider*. The doctor gladly accepts the priest as a fellow-worker, but is not moved from his position.

This position on one plane of the novel is simple, as the following quotation may serve to show. The doctor, Rieux, is speaking to the Parisian journalist, Rambert.

> ' . . . il ne s'agit pas d' héroïsme dans tout cela. Il s'agit d'honnêteté. C'est une idée qui peut faire rire, mais la seule façon de lutter contre la peste, c'est l'honnêteté.
> —Qu'est-ce que l'honnêteté, dit Rambert, d'un air soudain sérieux.
> —Je ne sais pas ce qu'elle est en général. Mais dans mon cas, je sais qu'elle consiste à faire mon métier'.

Not much more can be said on this level. M. Camus, however, wished to introduce a more general reference, and to do this he brings forward a character who may be said to come from the world of *The Outsider*. He is described as a *man* and one who does not waste words and is given a chance to explain himself at length in a meeting with the doctor after which they seal their friendship by a swim together in the sea. The function of this character seems to be to enable M. Camus to show the difference between his new position and those taken up in his earlier works. This forms the most interesting part of the book, but the least convincing as fiction. Consequently one's satisfaction with *La Peste* lies almost exclusively in the excellence of the author's *intentions*.

Tarrou is represented as having simplified his life into a search for *la paix intérieure*. His utility for the author is obvious in passages such as this:

> ' . . . je souffrais déjà de la peste bien avant de connaître cette ville et cette épidémie. C'est assez dire que je suis comme tout le monde. Mais il y a des gens qui ne le savent pas, ou qui se trouvent bien dans cet état, et des gens qui le savent et qui voudraient en sortir. Moi, j'ai toujours voulu en sortir'.

Just as the whole philosophy of the doctor crystallized round the injustice of untimely death, Tarrou's way of life is bound up with the intolerable injustice of judicial condemnation to death. 'J'ai vu que la société où je vivais était celle qui reposait sur la condamnation à mort'. He therefore decided to join the enemies of that society, but abandoned them when he discovered that they, too, carried out executions. He concluded that 'nous étions tous dans la peste, et j'ai perdu la paix'. He felt thereby condemned to become a perpetual outsider.

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'Cela vous paraîtra peut-être un peu simple, et je ne sais si cela est simple, mais je sais que cela est vrai. J'ai entendu tant de raisonnements qui ont failli me tourner la tête, et qui ont tourné suffisament d'autres têtes pour les faire consentir à l'assassinat, que j'ai compris que tout le malheur des hommes venait de ce qu'ils ne tenaient pas un langage clair. J'ai pris le parti alors de parler et d'agir clairement, pour me mettre sur le bon chemin. Par conséquent, je dis qu'il y a les fléaux et les victimes, et rien de plus. Si, disant cela, je deviens fléau moi-même, du moins, je n'y suis pas consentant. J'essaie d'être un meurtrier innocent. Vous voyez que ce n'est pas une grande ambition.

'Il faudrait, bien sûr, qu'il y eût une troisième catégorie, celle des vrais médecins, mais c'est un fait qu'on n'en rencontre pas beaucoup et que ce doit être difficile. C'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de me mettre du côté des victimes, en toute occasion, pour limiter les dégâts. Au milieu d'elles, je peux du moins chercher comment on arrive à la troisième catégorie, c'est-à-dire à la paix'.

Nothing in this account prepares us for the shock of hearing it summarized as follows:

'—En somme, dit Tarrou avec simplicité, ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de savoir comment on devient un saint.
—Mais vous ne croyez pas en Dieu.
—Justement. Peut-on être un saint sans Dieu, c'est le seul problème concret que je connaisse aujourd'hui'.

The doctor makes the rejoinder, 'je me sens plus de solidarité avec les vaincus qu'avec les saints. Je n'ai pas de goût, je crois, pour l'héroïsme et la sainteté. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est d'être un homme'. And Tarrou comments: ''Oui, nous cherchons la même chose, mais je suis moins ambitieux'.

When the time comes for the doctor to sum up and to derive a lesson from the events of the plague year he concludes,

'Tout ce que l'homme pouvait gagner au jeu de la peste et de la vie, c'était la connaissance et la mémoire. Peut-être était-ce cela que Tarrou appelait gagner la partie! . . . Mais si c'était cela, gagner la partie, qu'il devait être dur de vivre seulement avec ce qu'on sait et ce dont on souvient, et privé de ce qu'on espère. C'était ainsi sans doute qu'avait vécu Tarrou et il était conscient de ce qu'il y a de stérile dans une vie sans illusions. Il n'y a pas de paix sans espérance, et Tarrou qui refusait aux hommes le droit de condamner quiconque, qui savait pourtant que personne ne peut s'empêcher de condamner et que même les victimes se trouvaient être parfois des bourreaux, Tarrou avait vécu dans le déchirement et la contradiction, il n'avait jamais connu l'espérance'.

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The doctor gives up the attempt to find a meaning:

'il . . . pensait qu'il n'est pas important que ces choses aient un sens ou non, mais qu'il faut voir seulement ce qui est répondu à l'espoir des hommes'. And he decides, 'Pour tous ceux . . . qui s'étaient adressés par-dessus l'homme à quelque chose qu'ils n'imaginaient même pas'—(and here we must refer back to an earlier passage: ''d'autres, plus rares, comme Tarrou peut-être, avaient désiré la réunion avec quelque chose qu'ils ne pouvaient pas définir, mais qui leur paraissait le seul bien désirable. Et faute d'un autre nom, ils l'appelaient quelquefois la paix'')—il n'y avait pas eu de réponse'.

The doctor, however, identifies himself with common humanity:

'Rieux décida alors de rédiger le récit qui s'achève ici . . . pour témoigner en faveur de ces pestiférés, pour laisser du moins un souvenir de l'injustice et de la violence qui leur avaient été faites, et pour dire simplement ce qu'on apprend au milieu des fléaux, qu'il y a dans les hommes plus de choses à admirer que de choses à mépriser. Mais il savait cependant que cette chronique ne pouvait pas être celle de la victoire définitive. Elle ne pouvait être que la témoignage de ce qu'il avait fallu accomplir et que, sans doute, devraient accomplir encore, contre la terreur et son arme inlassable, malgré leur déchirements personnels, tous les hommes qui, ne pouvant être des saints et refusant d'admettre les fléaux, s'efforcent cependant d'être des médecins'.

In finding ordinary human life not quite hopeless, and in making the most of what pitiful chances human beings have of realizing their hopes, the doctor of *La Peste* has deviated from the canons laid down in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. 'Mais une attitude absurde pour demeurer telle doit rester consciente de sa gratuité. Ainsi de l'oeuvre. Si les commandements de l'absurde n'y sont pas respectés, si elle n'illustre pas le divorce et la révolte, si elle sacrifie aux illusions et suscite l'espoir, elle n'est plus gratuite. Je ne puis me détacher d'elle. Ma vie peut y trouver un sens: cela est dérisoire. Elle n'est plus cet exercice de détachement et de passion qui consomme la splendeur et l'inutilité d'une vie d'homme'. In measuring the degree of importance to be attached to this development of thought we must in the first place refer to the conduct and reflections of the doctor. Now, though the doctor shows a good deal of humanity in his relations with his patients, he seems to have to undergo an argument with himself before he can recognize himself in them. The people of Oran are described as soulless creatures of habit, hard-working and not inventive in seeking their pleasures. 'On dira sans doute que cela n'est pas particulier à notre ville et qu'en somme tous nos contemporains sont ainsi. Sans doute, rien n'est plus naturel, aujourd'hui, que de voir des gens travailler du matin au soir et choisir ensuite de perdre aux cartes, au café, et en bavardages, le temps qui leur reste

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pour vivre. Mais il est des villes et des pays où les gens ont, de temps en temps, le soupçon d'autre chose. En général, cela ne change pas leur vie. Seulement il y a eu le soupçon et c'est toujours cela de gagné. Oran, au contraire, est apparemment une ville sans soupçons, c'est-à-dire une ville tout à fait moderne'. The people share the universal inability to imagine the possibility of catastrophes, such as the plague. Inevitably we are led to feel the element of deliberate effort in the doctor's attempts to share the feelings of the inhabitants of Oran. The word *voulu* stands out in the following: ' . . . il a pris délibérément le parti de la victime et a voulu rejoindre les hommes, ses concitoyens, dans les seules certitudes qu'ils aient en commun, et qui sont l'amour, la souffrance et l'exil'.

But in finding *La Peste* a handbook suitable rather for the political leader or any kind of leader who sees clearer than the majority, we are driven back on the quality of the leader's vision and to the statements put into the mouths of the leading characters. When we ask what M. Camus offers besides the spontaneous morality, the willingness to act on behalf of others and to endure suffering open-eyed, the vague but cheering gestures towards *le bonheur*, the belief in the predominant goodness of man, it is hard to reply. Perhaps *La Peste* is once again merely a *part* of M. Camus' experience? In suspecting that it represents all there is, so far, I may be permitted to refer to a leaflet announcing a collection of books under the general title 'Espoir' ('dirgée par Albert Camus'). Here are a few extracts: 'Nous sommes dans le nhiilisme. Peut-on sortir du nihilisme? C'est la question qu'on nous inflige. Mais nous n'en sortirons pas en faisant mine d'ignorer le mal de l'époque ou en décidant de le nier. Le seul espoir est de le nommer au contraire et d'en faire l'inventaire pour trouver la guérison au bout de la maladie . . . Reconnaissons donc que c'est le temps de l'espoir, même s'il agit d'un espoir difficile'.

H. A. MASON.

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HUGO—AND THE REST

MODERN FRENCH LITERATURE, 1870-1940, by Denis Saurat (*Dent*, 12/6).

Professor Saurat's introduction is entitled 'Inside Conditions' and 'Inner Development', but its real theme is 'Mallarmé may be Proust's father, but Zola is Proust's mother, and perhaps this applies to the whole period'. This curious statement is elaborated in a series of unrelated portraits, none of which is sharply defined, for Professor Saurat does no more than compare, in the most general terms, one writer with another—or with several others—without ever coming to grips with any of them. A style which seems to be continually striving after the easy formula only serves to emphasize this crude approach. A few examples will suffice:

> ' "André Chamson is a sort of home Malraux", "Ramuz might be called the Hémon of Switzerland", "Fernard Gregh is a virile counterpart of Madame de Noailles", "Gide comes out as the Chateaubriand of the twentieth century", Duhamel also is born out of Zola by Mallarmé, and Céline and Malraux", Montherlant is the Rimbaud of the novel of the 1920's; he is to Proust what Rimbaud had been to Mallarmé", "Anatole France, Barrès: nineteenth century: in colour a blend of Hugo and Stendhal" '

When Professor Saurat does attempt more detailed analysis, the result is this:

> 'Here is a true synthesis of Barrès: "le Jardin de Bérénice" is "sur l'Oronte", but also the knight is obviously a "Déraciné" who should have stayed on "la Colline inspirée", or perhaps managed to bring back his eastern lady to Lorraine. Worse things have happened. Thus Barrès ends on an ironical note and we are the richer for it'.

Professor Saurat is even less successful when he covers an extensive field and deals with a group of writers. The chapter 'Literary Critics' illustrates his black and white approach to literature. Sainte-Beuve is dismissed in two sentences as a 'bad literary critic' because he was 'always wrong' in his decisions about his contemporaries. Sainte-Beuve had faults and, as everyone knows, his judgments about his contemporaries—many of whom were mediocre and didn't deserve the attention he gave them—were less reliable than those on his predecessors. But Professor Saurat omits all mention of Sainte-Beuve's positive achievements as a critic and gives no valid reasons for his pronouncement. He is clearly speaking from a prejudice. Hugo is behind this particular one, as he is behind most of the others.

After dismissing Brunetière, Faguet, Lemaître and Rémy de Gourmont (who was intelligent but a 'failure', Professor Saurat

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then turns to Péguy who, because he wrote an excellent book on Hugo 'Victor-Marie, Comte Hugo', is 'a model to critics' and is 'intellectually much higher than Brunetière and Rémy de Gourmont or *any of the others*'. He is, in fact, 'the best critic of the Third Republic'.

If these statements were derived from a serious study of the critic in relation to his age and the literary tradition, and led on to a revaluation of French criticism—a field in which, at least until 1939, the French have tended to be conservative and unadventurous —they might be of some value. As they stand, they are irrelevant and misleading.

It would, however, be unfair to suggest that Professor Saurat does not take himself seriously. He is admittedly insensitive to the literature of this period, and especially to its poetry; but he has two standards—all the more insidious because never clearly stated—by which he judges every writer. Péguy conforms to both of them: he admires Hugo and he is an 'honest man'. These two criteria are really one and the same because, in Professor Saurat's view, you cannot be an honest man and not admire Hugo. Their application leads him to the following conclusions.

Rimbaud, although a portent, and doubtless a bad one, is turned into the first of Hugo's many children: 'his maternal origin is only Victor Hugo; in Rimbaud's brain a fusion of Baudelaire and Hugo took place'; and he wrote 134 immortal lines most of which 'could have been written by Victor Hugo'. They were not of course, but that doesn't seem to matter. This count of immortal lines does not include anything from the *Illuminations* or from the *Saison en Enfer*. In short, Professor Saurat does not see Rimbaud's individual greatness nor his significance in the development of French poetry—which perhaps explains why the 'poète maudit' is not entirely damned. Corbière on the other hand is, no doubt because his reply to 'Océano Nox' was a better poem than Hugo's, and he, with Lautréamont and Laforgue, is classed as a poet who does not 'really count'. Mallarmé had many shortcomings, the chief being that his conception of poetry was new, and totally different from that of Hugo. He preferred, we are told, 'silence to thunder', with the result 'out goes Hugo'. No condemnation can therefore be too severe and we learn that Mallarmé's great handicap is that he cannot write either in prose or in poetry'. His poems are 'mostly bad', and Professor Saurat calculates that, at a generous estimate, only some thirty lines in all are 'genuinely immortal'.

He applies the same standards to the theatre and discovers that Edmond Rostand—in his view more important than Claudel and Giraudoux—is the 'last of the great dramatists'. Cyrano de Bergerac is really 'Victor Hugo's Don César de Bazan' who 'wishing to become the central character of a play . . . makes Rostand write the play'. The other plays *L'Aiglon* and *Chantecler* are failures but they are 'great failures'. It is salutary to compare this opinion about Rostand with that of a young contemporary French

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critic who, although not great, is at least sensitive and intelligent and does not suffer from 'Hugolâtrie'. *Cyrano de Bergerac, l'Aiglon, Chantecler* sont des modèles achevés de fausse poésie, de faux lyrisme et de fausse grandeur . . . la langue et le vers français y sont bafoués avec insolence par un écrivain au- dessous du néant. On rougit à l'idée que ces pièces ont passé et passent encore pour des chefs-d'oeuvre aux yeux du peuple qui se prétend le plus spirituel de la terre'.

In the chapters on the novel, the established classics—Zola, Loti, Anatole France, Barrès, Duhamel—are treated with indiscriminate reverence while Romain Rolland is shown to be a writer of the nineteenth century close to 'the spirit of Hugo'. He even transcends with his book on Péguy (who, remember, wrote a book on Hugo) the 'best critic of the Third Republic'. So he is acclaimed one of the three greatest novelists since Proust—the others being Barrès and Anatole France. Proust, however, is not a 'normal human being' and clearly not an honest man; hence 'let no one attempt to imitate Proust'.

Professor Saurat, who states that 'Poetry is by its very essence a failure', becomes progressively more unreliable as he approaches the poetry of our time. Here, apart from his chapters on Valéry and Supervielle, it is clear that he has read little and is not well-informed. With Valéry, he can still refer back with some effect to one of his standards; 'In a better period, in one that had a more constructive spirit. Valéry could have been another Hugo'. His 'song' is 'thinner as well as less fantastic (sic) than Hugo's' but none the less he is the greatest poet since Hugo. With Supervielle, he can refer to his other standard, honesty; for Supervielle is 'a normal human being'.

The chapter on Supervielle will be useful if it draws attention to a poet who is comparatively little known in this country. Professor Saurat stresses the obvious aspect of Supervielle's work, the 'strength and confidence'; qualities which, it is important to note, are found mostly in poems about animals and children where Supervielle can forget the complexities of mature experience and recapture moments of a lost innocence. He does not see, however, the other and more significant aspect of Supervielle; the expression in delicate and subtle poetry of his failure to find any remedy for man's isolation and distress in the contemporary world. Supervielle's friend, Henri Michaux, has explored more deeply not only the implications of our present predicament but also the possibilities of 'exorcising' it through poetry, and his 'Plume' is a figure as representative of this age as 'le Dandy' was of Baudelaire's. Michaux, who published his first work in 1922, is now one of the most important—and certainly the most original—of the contemporary French poets. Yet Professor Saurat refers to him only once in the meaningless phrase 'his name is enough'. As might be expected, Professor Saurat prefers the obvious Aragon, the patriotic

[1] *Kléber Haedans*: *'Une Histoire de la Littérature Française* (p. 424).

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poet of 1942, to the surrealist, and better, Aragon of 'le Paysan de Paris'; and he prefers him to Eluard. Of Eluard, whom he does not understand, he speaks with some contempt, and quotes as if it were a complete poem—to which he has added his own punctuation —what is in fact only the beginning of 'Sans Age'. Fargue and Jouve are likewise dismissed with contempt, and there is no mention of Reverdy (who is essental to an understanding of Eluard), St. John Perse, Max Jacob, and nothing at all about the younger poets.

The Bibliography is interesting as an indication of Professor Saurat's approach to literature and of his equipment. Three of the eight books listed are by Professor Saurat. The rest can be useful for reference if the reader knows that 'Academic criticism in the best sense' means potted comments in the form of a literary digest. Professor Saurat characteristically finds it necessary to qualify his recommendation of Thibaudet's book which, although occasionally superficial, shows a grasp of literary tradition since the Revolution, and is stimulating and well written. It is significant that, like his own book, none of those mentioned contains an informed and balanced appreciation of Surréalisme which, although dead as a movement, is still pervasive as an influence, and must be taken into account if we are to understand contemporary French poetry.

No bibliography of this period would be complete which did not include the following books:

Initiation A La Litterature Francaise D'aujourd'hui. Émile Bouvier. (La Renaissance du Livre, 1928).
Inquietude et Reconstruction. Benjamin Crémieux. (Corrêa, 1931).
De Baudelaire au Surrealisme. Marcel Raymond. (Corti, 1933).
Les Fleurs de Tarbes. Jean Paulhan. (Gallimard, 1941).
Faux Pas. Maurice Blanchot. (Gallimard, 1943).
Histoire du Surréalisme. Maurice Nadeau. (Ed. du Seuil, 1945).
Axel's Castle. Edmund Wilson. (Scribners, 1931).

It is a pity that Professor Saurat's book, which he no doubt intended as a serious study, should add so little to our knowledge or to our appreciation of a period about which so much yet remains to be discovered.

C. A. HACKETT.

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INTERPRETER OR ORACLE?

THE CROWN OF LIFE : ESSAYS IN INTERPRETATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S FINAL PLAYS, by G. Wilson Knight (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 18/-).

In this book Mr. Wilson Knight has returned to the interpretation of Shakespeare. After *Principles of Shakespearian Production* he ranged widely over the rest of English literature in *The Burning Oracle* and *The Starlit Dome*. Later his rôle as apocalyptic prophet was extended on patriotic lines and we were given the Messages of Shakespeare and Milton for democracy at war. More recently even the pretence of critical control has been abandoned and the literary texts have been treated simply as material from which to extract the prophetic wisdom: in *Hiroshima* this is almost admitted in so many words. The cloudy verbosity of these later works may be left to fade into oblivion as soon as possible, but *The Crown of Life* seems to be offered as criticism, and it is a sad example of the deterioration brought about by bad habits persistently indulged—sad, because there is also sufficient genuine insight to remind us that Mr. Knight also wrote *The Wheel of Fire*.

Not that even *The Wheel of Fire* was free from disquieting signs that its author's mind was functioning under an altogether inadequate critical discipline. Nor are they lacking in the even earlier essay *Myth and Miracle* (1929), now reprinted as the first chapter of this book. It contains a brief statement of the principles later expressed more adequately in the introductory essay on Shakespeare Interpretation in *The Wheel of Fire*, and an outline of the significance of the last plays as a group. But there are already a number of wide gestures in the direction of Tolstoy, Goethe, Dostoievsky and Keats, and such comments as this:

> 'It need not be a progress stretched across a span of years: in Shakespeare I have traced an exact miniature of the succession of great plays to follow in the thought-sequence of one speech in *Richard II*; and the same sequence is separately apparent in some of Tennyson's early poems'.

The main objection to Mr. Wilson Knight's methods of interpretation is precisely that whatever there may be in common between the thought-sequences of *Richard II*, the mature plays and early Tennyson, it is clearly not experience concretely realized in verse. For the most elementary sensibility to language and its uses it is the *difference* between these works that counts—the obvious conclusion being that Mr. Knight is not concerned with particular realization at all, only with quite superficial resemblances of sense,

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subject-matter or 'symbolism' (using the word to mean a straightforward mechanical correspondence).

This lack of critical discipline often shows itself as a downright insensitiveness to style, and nowhere more clearly than in discussion of passages of doubtful authenticity. One sympathizes with his reluctance to follow Robertson and the editors in blaming the Interpolator for every passage they dislike, but elaborate defences of the Hecate scenes in *Macbeth* and the earlier parts of *Pericles* are simply the opposite extreme. Differences of rhythm and movement seem to weigh far less with Mr. Knight than resemblances of imagery or 'symbolism'. It may be arguable that there are Shakespearian phrases in the first two acts of *Pericles*, but he shows an altogether inadequate appreciation of the world of difference in movement between, say, the shipwrecked Pericles' lines at the beginning of Act II and the great storm-speech which opens Act III. Indeed, he says of the former, 'The accent is clearly Shakespearian'. For the vision in *Cymbeline* he makes out a tolerable case; though, Shakespeare's or not, I doubt whether it will bear the weight of significance which his interpretation gives to it. But the most astonishing of all is the claim for the complete authenticity of *Henry VIII*. Anxious to fit the play in as the final goal of the Shakespearian progress, the culmination of the design, he is driven to explain away the limp 'Fletcherian' verse: this, we are told, is a new mode evolved by Shakespeare specially for the expression of religious conversion and analogous experiences! He seems to think that the case against the greater part of the play rests chiefly on pseudo-scientific 'verse tests', but anyone who can believe that Cranmer's last speech is by the poet who about the same time was writing *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* will believe anything. Perhaps it is significant that throughout the book there isn't a single reference to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a professed collaboration between Shakespeare and Fletcher in which the obviously Shakespearian passages are as unlike the 'Fletcherian' parts of *Henry VIII* as possible: for example, compare the following:

> . . . she shall be—
> But few now living can behold that goodness—
> A pattern to all princes living with her,
> And all that shall succeed: Saba was never
> More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue
> Than this pure soul shall be: all princely graces,
> That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
> With all the virtues that attend the good,
> Shall still be doubled on her; truth shall nurse her;.
> Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her;
> She shall be lov'd and fear'd; her own shall bless her;
> Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
> And hang their heads with sorrow; good grows with her.
>
> (*Henry VIII*, V, v, 20-32).

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> The more proclaiming
> Our suit shall be neglected: when her arms,
> Able to lock Jove from a synod, shall
> By warranting moonlight corslet thee, O, when
> Her twinning cherries shall their sweetness fall
> Upon thy tasteful lips, what wilt thou think
> Of rotten kings or blubber'd queens? what care
> For what thou feel'st not, what thou feel'st being able
> To make Mars spurn his drum? O, if thou couch
> But one night with her, every hour in't will
> Take hostage of thee for a hundred, and
> Thou shalt remember nothing more than what
> That banquet bids thee to!
>
> (*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, I, i, 175-186).

The different intention of the two passages is surely insufficient to account for such a complete difference of rhythm.[1] There are times when one is inclined to suspect that Mr. Knight actually prefers the 'Fletcherian' type of verse: that may seem unfair, yet what is one to say to the remark on Tennyson's dramas in *Hiroshima*? :

> 'The blank verse, unlike Hardy's, is as dramatically forceful as Shakespeare's and Byron's, and to be rigidly distinguished from the simple falling rhythms of his narrative manner'.

Elsewhere in this book he warns us against 'regarding tormented rhythms as a poetical goal'. In general this may be sound, but only concrete examples could make it clear whether or not Mr. Knight is merely echoing the conventional objections to Shakespeare's later style. Certainly his appreciation of Posthumus's account of the battle in Cymbeline does rather less than justice to that fine piece of dramatic verse.

There are other instances, too, of something surprisingly like a reversion to nineteenth-century attitudes: Mr. Knight seems at times unduly worried by anachronisms; occasionally parts of the scene-by-scene analysis are not far removed from Dowden ('But Buckingham, I think, fingers in his convulsive passion a cross worn on his breast; and it is this that accuses not only him, but all his predecessors in passion . . . '); while parts of the panegyric

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[1]Part of the argument is that the verse of *Henry VIII* is above Fletcher's normal standard: Mr. Knight quotes a passage from *Bonduca* as a fine exception. It seems to me typical, and not least in its unconscious echoing of Shakespeare, a point which he seems to have missed:

> Farewell all glorious wars, now thou art gone
> And honest arms adieu: all noble battles
> Maintain'd in thirst of honour, not of blood
> Farewell for ever.

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on Imogen would almost fit into an essay by Hazlitt.

All the same, the book is not negligible, and those who felt that the best of Mr. Knight's early work came nearer than most existing criticism to the full poetic experience of mature Shakespearian drama will find illuminating passages in all of these essays, except possibly that on *Henry VIII*. There, indeed, a tone of strained exaggeration suggests that most readers are unlikely to find the argument convincing: there is 'nothing more remarkable in Shakespeare' than the 'three similar falling movements' of Buckingham, Wolsey and Katharine; 'never was Shakespeare's human insight more consummately used' than in the Old Lady's satirical comments on Anne Bullen's rejection of ambition; 'no words in Shakespeare' are 'so deeply loaded with a life's wisdom' as Cranmer's prophecy. The account of *Pericles* deals effectively with the last three acts (it is the peculiarity of Mr. Knight's analysis that it improves in direct ratio to the strength of his text) and brings out clearly the new interests which took possession of Shakespeare's mind in the late plays. "Great Creating [illegible]e": an essay on *The Winter's Tale*' is, I think, the best in the book. If it has not the economical force of Mr. Traversi's essay it completes that account with a wealth of suggestive analysis, especially of the first two acts and the last scenes. The chapter on *Cymbeline* is less convincing as a whole: the suggestions of nationalist and patriotic themes, with a careful distinction between classical Rome and Renaissance Italy, are interesting but they will hardly bear the emphasis laid on them; similarly Mr. Knight seems to me to exaggerate the significance of the theme of royalty and the importance of the vision. But here again there are incidental passages of effective analysis. *The Tempest* offers obvious opportunities for the discovery of esoteric significance, and here accordingly we find references to the work of Colin Still and parallels with sixteenth-century Chinese fables and Nietzsche. Nevertheless there are valuable pages of comment more closely related to the text.

It is extremely unfortunate that the genuine insight and real originality of Mr. Knight's best work on Shakespeare should be so inextricably interwoven with his prophetic rhapsodies: as it is, one can see only too clearly why the academically conservative should believe in sticking to Bradley and Granville-Barker. The trouble is not merely that he is tactically an embarrassing ally and that with each new extravagance the daughters of the Philistines triumph, but also that his work cannot be recommended to the critically immature without the most careful warnings and elaborate reservations. The valuable part of his work has been and will continue to be influential, but he will probably have to be content for its influence to be largely unacknowledged and indirect.

R. G. Cox.

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